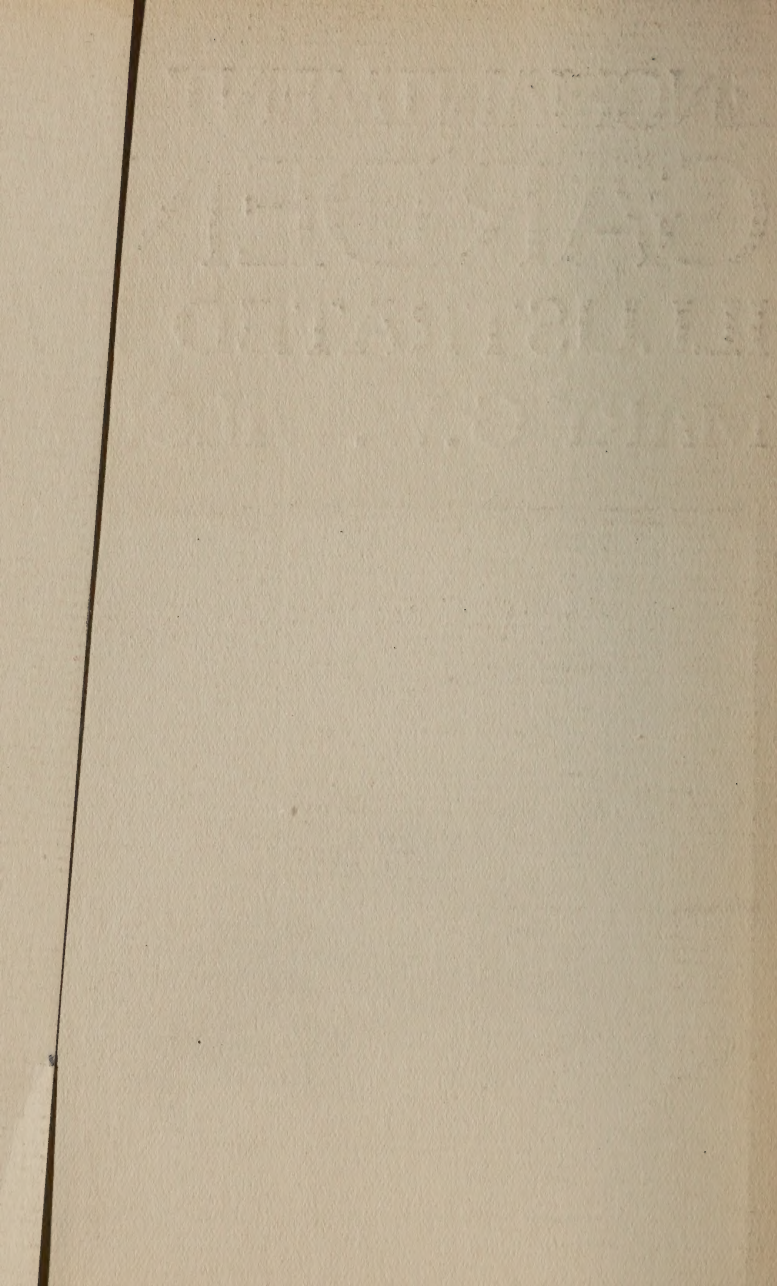
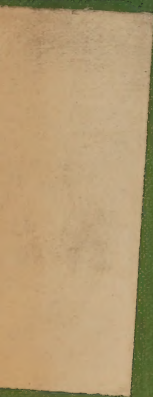


ENCHANTMENT OF
GARDENS
ILLUSTRATED BY
MARY G.W. WILSON







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ENCHANTMENT OF GARDENS



ALL THROUGH THE DAYS OF CHILDHOOD THE
GARDEN IS OUR FAIRY GROUND OF SWEET
ENCHANTMENT AND INNOCENT WONDER

ENCHANTMENT OF GARDENS

ILLUSTRATED IN COLOUR
BY MARY G. W. WILSON



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reproduced in colour from pastels by

MARY G. W. WILSON

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THE PRAISE OF GARDENS
BY E. V. B.

THE PRAISE OF GARDENS

A GARDEN! The word is in itself a picture, and what pictures it reveals! All through the days of childhood the garden is our fairy-ground of sweet enchantment and innocent wonder. From the first dawn of thought, when we learned our simple lessons of Eden and its loss, and seemed to see the thornless garden, watered with clear streams, beautiful with spreading trees, and the train of unnamed beasts and birds meekly passing before their spotless lord; and then beyond, far onward to that other garden beloved by the Man of Sorrows, Gethsemane, where we could never picture the blossoming of roses or murmurous hum of summer bees, but only the sombre garden walks, and One kneeling among the olives, and dark, heavy drops upon the grass. And near to this, the garden of the Sepulchre—in a dewy dawnlight, angel-haunted. These were our Gardens of the Soul. In later years the mists of those older, holier spots wear away as snow-wreaths in the vivid brilliance of the Gardens of Poetry. Then, dreamlike, from sap-

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phire seas arose the Gardens of the Hesperides, and we beheld the white-vestured maidens as they danced around the golden-fruited, dragon-guarded tree. Then bloomed for us the gardens of mediæval Italy. The Poets' garden of cypress and lemon, of marble stairs and sparkling fountains, with all their moonlight mirth and sorrow; ilex-groves of song and silver-threaded laughter; visions of Rimini, or gay Boccaccio's tales. Then did we linger where high-piping night-ingales sang to the Persian Rose in the Gulistan of Saâdi; felt the pure sunlight shine in a little wilderness of roses, or the green shade that lay round the apple-trees of Andrew Marvell; or in the garden of the Sensitive Plant, we followed the shadowy steps of the Lady, our souls entranced with the love of every flower she loved. They are all beautiful, these Gardens of Poetry! and through the midst of them flows the broad stream of Memory, isled with fair lilied lawns, fringed with willowy forests and whispering reeds. And not less beautiful than these ideal shades

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are the gardens which live unchanged and unchanging in many a painted picture within the heart. Real, and not less ideal, is the remembrance of gardens we have seen: seen once, it may be, and never since forgotten.

“Un souvenir heureux est peut-être sur terre
Plus vrai que le bonheur.”

So, lovely as truth, crystal-clear as a poet's thought, are the earthly Edens our eyes beheld in the years that are past. How can we forget the gardens of queenly Genoa, in the days ere yet she was discrowned? of Florence, of Rome and Albano and Tivoli? The palm-gardens of Bordighera, where periwinkles—*fiori dei morte*—rain down their blue from the overflowing laps of ancient palms, or wander in smiles about the rugged roots; the trellised pergolas and anemoned lawns of Mortola; or those strange island-gardens, Isola Madre of Maggiore and terraced Isola Bella? Long indeed is the lovely list. Think back into the days that were, and remember them. . . . How they live green and fresh and sweet in the bloom and

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the glow of their eternal summer! For you, their skies are ever blue, their roses never fade. Winter has never silenced the splash and flow of their fountains, nor chilled the green from one leaf in their deep groves. The lemon, ripening in pale gold, still hangs ungathered against the southern terrace, where scarlet passion-flowers burn in drifted fire-spots. The peacock, sunning himself upon the stone balustrade, shakes out his emerald glories, while you loiter along the flowery borders of his kingdom; and you know that violets hide somewhere in the grass, for the very sunshine is impregnated with their perfume. Or perchance in fancy you may tread again the narrow pathway that winds around the rocky sea-wall at old Monaco. There, for you, the globes of red geranium reflect still, warm shadows about the names of lovers long since forgot or dead, wrought upon the tablet leaves of aloes or of cactus. There mesembryanthemums shine still, sunned over as of old with rayed discs of red and yellow, while basking lizards at your ap-

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proach rustle away under the leaves. Lean over the low parapet wall and watch the waves dash in white foam against the jagged rocks below. The old cliff blooms out into cistus and spikes of purple stocks; midway the sea-birds scream and play above the little fishing-boats, tossing like fairy nutshells on the crisp blue summer sea. From the sunny Mediterranean and that narrow strip of hanging garden, dream on into the black cypress shades of Tuscany.

In all Italy—the land of flowers, the garden of the world—there are no gardens more stately, nor any nobler cypress-trees, than at Villa d'Este of Tivoli. In the spring, by the straight smooth ways under the ilexes and cypresses, all day the golden gloom is made rosy where ever and anon red Judas-trees shower down their bloom. Marble stairs lead up through terraced heights to paved walks under the Palazzo walls. There the air is faint with rich fragrance of the orange-trees. The lofty spires of ancient cypresses reach up above the topmost ter-

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race; far below in the garden, between their dark ranks, sparkle the upspringing fountains. Beyond, above the tall cypresses, rise brown crumbling walls of the old town, piled up with open loggie and arched gates and overshadowing roofs; and high over these, great barren hills crowned with ruined fortresses and shattered keeps. To the west rolls out the ocean of the wide Campagna, undulating far away where Rome is lost in the sunset. Dream on, until you sigh with the wondrous sweetness of Rome herself in the wild wood-garden of the Vatican, where in April days thousands of odorous cyclamen flowers flush with crimson all the moss beneath the trees. Dream on, till you see once more the swaying of the tall pines and bathe your steps in tracts of flowery grass in the green Pamphili Doria, and watch the mystic fountain, most like the form of an inconstant spirit, like a pale blue robed Undine uncertain if to leave her source, trembling betwixt desire and fear.

Fain would we linger in the gardens of

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Portugal, under the sweet-scented camellias of Cintra—lost in reverie amid her rose-wreathed thickets. Strange is the remembrance of the beautiful Montserrat cathedral water-aisles, whose torrents foam down in long cascades beneath the high-arched tree-ferns. And in Spain, like a scene in the *Arabian Nights*, comes back to us the old Moorish garden of Granada, with marble-lined canal and lofty arcades of trimmed yew, topped with crescents, pyramids, and crowns.

Those are our gardens of past joy. Yet others still exist, whose memory in secret cherished is shrouded with a tender mystery. Lovelier than all gardens we have known, graced with the far-off charm of the unattainable are they, the gardens we have wished for, but have never seen. Words cannot paint them, for memory sets no copy: yet the longing for them does still possess our hearts with visions of their unknown beauty. Long ago there was a garden such as this: a garden I never saw, whose image haunts me with a dim regret. It was in the South

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of France. The hot, white road brought us at last to the foot of a rocky steep. A shepherd boy pointed to the stony path we had to climb, winding up through thorny ways, amongst the cistus and wild lavender. High on the summit stood the small pink château with its chapel, and the garden walled all round. The chapel door stood wide open and showed within the altar with its faded roses and its tinselled Virgin. But the garden door in the wall was shut and locked. There on the thymy ledge outside the garden wall, beside the worn step of the blind shut door, we sat down among the irises. In the still hush of afternoon we listened to the gentle stir of leaves among the walnuts and evergreen oaks that overtopped the wall. Pale pink petals floated down from the china roses clambering about the trees, and fell softly at our feet. Sometimes there came a little sound of tinkling waters running over into some marble basin, or the fitful melody of a nightingale, or the voice of the turtle was heard somewhere within the thick shade,

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and the scent of new-blown orange-flowers ever and again just touched the air. Sometimes a great black wild bee heavily laden passed over from the other side, droned for a moment in the purple irises, and drifted away into space. Below the rock, and away as far as the eye could reach, a grey mist of olive woods filled all the valley, veiling the mountain-sides till lost at last in lilac hollows of the hills. But the garden gate in the wall of Castellar opened never to us; and never save in fancy have we crossed its sunny threshold nor wandered down the close-clipped alleys, or ever seen the sculptured nymphs gleam white amid the ilex-groves—its fountains or the bloom of its summer flowers.

And yet other gardens there are, like none of these. They are no "Adonis Gardens" whose flowers quickly bloom and quickly die. They are not laid out for pastime, nor for our joy in hours of idleness. The flower-beds are narrow, and often the best bloom of them is withered. But the flowers are not for delight; they are all for remembrance. Tears

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have watered them; Love bound the amaranth in each faded wreath. To most of us it may be that some small spot in the Garden of the Lord is dearer than the finest pleasure-garden; for here we lent to the Heavenly Husbandman the light of our eyes, the flower of our lives. The beautiful feeling that would make into a garden the place where the dead rest is well-nigh universal, and finds, perhaps, its best and most natural expression in England. Many a little country churchyard, far and near, even to the remote corners of our land, has its well-kept borders, and is weekly dressed and bright with fresh flowers. And this is as it should be. For Pride or any other reason, the costliest monument is raised; but only Love will plant roses about the tomb, or weave for it the crown of lilies: it is Love only that will lay some poor flower upon the little green mound. The Poor have no need of carven headstones; they know well the graves of their dead, and thither will they bring in all simplicity their best and gayest from the cottage plot, so that

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on a summer Sunday the churchyard is like a garden. It is more than a garden! it is *Mazar*—as in the Arabic phrase for the grave —“the place of resort.”

And how sweet is such a garden, should you find it in the wood! It was June in the New Forest. We had wandered out of the sandy forest track into a green labyrinth of nutty ways. Beyond, the beech-wood stretched in heavy masses. Hidden deep in the hazel underwood, a thrush sang as they sing only when summer is young. We too were young, and we sang all together. On a sudden sounded, quite close at hand, the harsh notes of a band of music. The village musicians had found us out; and they came, and with “fiddle, fife, and drum” broke up the quiet of our cool retreat. Hush! suddenly penetrating through and above the jangling tunes rose the deep tones of a funeral bell. Again and again at solemn intervals the bell intoned through all the light discordance, while the thrush amidst the hazels unheeding still sang on.  The knell,

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wherever it might be, sounded clear and strong through depths of woodland leaves. We thought of Hans Andersen's tale of the bell that pierced the night among the trees, and none knew from whence, and none ever found its secret, but the king's son and the peasant lad. Unlike the story, we had not far to seek. Soon was found a little churchling in a clearing of the wood. The bell had ceased. In the garden the mourners were departing from a fresh-made grave. Lines of bright limnanthus and nemophila on either side the path gave back the sunshine. At the open door stood the white-haired sexton with his keys. Entering in out of the golden sunshine the church seemed to be a space of darkness where the windows glowed in colours richly bright, like gardens of the blest in the land that is afar off.

Endless and full in far-reaching sweetness is the Praise of Gardens. From the days of classic Greece and Rome down into modern times the theme bears onward. But is the praise now sincere? Who is there now to

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whom the ordering of the ground about their homes is as a "princely diversion"? Who in our day will care to annex to their palace-houses gardens such as world-famed Chatsworth or Moor Park, Blenheim, Trentham, Chiswick, Nonsuch, or Hampton Court? Where now shall we find a new Albury such as Evelyn planned, or another Dropmore? Or across the Channel, who is there now to imagine the grandeur of a new Garden of Versailles, of Fontainebleau or Chantilly, or those which surround the Pallavicini Villa in Italy? The world is narrowing. Everyone in these days must have a garden of some sort; but few have time to live much in it, and a first-sight glare of colour from the windows suffices for the many. And herein perhaps the secret lies. The natural thirst of the eye for colour has to be satisfied, and much knowledge—and time, which is more scarce—are required for the best manner of giving it. And since its reaction after the almost forgotten craze for aniline, pure colour is denied in our houses, the garden is called

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upon to fill the void. Even cottagers' gardens—and their beauty has time out of mind been the peculiar feature of our English roadside scenery—are losing fast their character of homely gaiety and interest, with the innovation of "colour" in scarlet and yellow bedding-out plants, to the neglect of the pinks and gillyflowers and honeysuckles beloved of our forefathers. The garden-like charm of the London parks, made up of brilliant flower-beds backed by avenues of trees, is pre-eminently the charm of colour, which was surely never more sorely needed or more splendidly supplied; while the quiet onward step of taste and culture is marked by the sowing of crocuses in the grass. The simple magic of colour for its own sake can never be displaced, yet a garden in the highest sense means more than this. There are those who know and love each plant that grows in it; some by whom "lessons sweet of spring returning" are learned new every year amongst their daffodils and snowdrops; to whom summer and winter and "brown autumn's

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store" bring hopes and pleasures in their "garden of delightful smells," undreamt of by the many who judge only of the red and blue and yellow stretch of flowers in dreary repetition, year after year, and who believe the well-mown lawns to mean only space for outdoor games. And the joy of a garden never stales. It may be the tiniest plot that we possess, or it may cover acres of royal extent. No matter whether large or small, it will feed that inner light which is rarely absent from the obscurest life, and which in the greatest shines forth as the creative power of poetry. Thus in Persia we read that "the humblest peasant's cottage has a patch in its court reserved as a flower-garden; a little gleam of Nature's poetry amid the arid waste and prose of life, as poverty and oppression render it to him." And more than this, there grows up a kind of sympathy between the garden and its master. Trees and flowers seem to rejoice in responding vigorously to the care and love bestowed upon them, while the master himself rejoices in

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their growth and well-being. An old writer (R. Austin in *The Garden of Fruit Trees*) of the seventeenth century says: "As the husbandman takes pleasure in his fruit-trees so they (in a sense) take pleasure in him. He delights to walke among them and converse with them by meditation, searching out their natures and virtues; he takes pleasure in their shade in heate of summer, and in their wholesome fruits in their seasons; and the fruit-trees also may be said to take pleasure in the husbandman's watering and dressing; discovered by their increase, strong and vigorous shootes, pleasant blossoms, and multitudes of fruits from yeare to yeare."

Fashions change in gardens as in all else. From the days of pleached alleys and bow-er walks, quincuncial paths and all manner of fantastic topiarian devices, to serpentine walks, and little flower-beds set out all over the lawns, and the unmeaning monstrosities of cast-iron seats and vases as designed for the plates in *Paxton's Magazine*, is a very wide interval. Summer-houses, once so im-

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portant to every well-devised garden, are no longer in vogue. The word "arbour" is almost out of print. Very dreary to us seem the arbours and summer-houses, for which in those times they spared no expense. We like best now to sit upon the grass under a tree. Happily the more fantastic imaginings of ruins and temples, and "Anglo-Chinois Gardens," whatever they may have been, are out of fashion finally and for ever. We spend less pains and trouble on our gardens, and yet, in a way, there is more to be done. The costly orangery of other days remains for the most part empty, or put to another use; but we make our cuttings, which involves an immense outlay of time and labour. The phase of dull and paltry gardening is outlived, as is, almost, that of carpet bedding—and good taste is coming round again. The formality of the old style, tempered with a love of trees and plants in Nature's own undress, must always be the best. And with the perfecting of all arts of gardening learned during these past hundred

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years, we ought to find no difficulty in the laying out of finer and more beautiful gardens than the world has ever seen. Yet it is hardly so. We have flowers and fruits in far greater variety, but the very best plan for a modern garden will still be that which most nearly embodies the idea of some delicious pleasaunce of old time (such as that one at Kenilworth described in Laneham's pages), or follows the design of some old French or Dutch masters in the art of *jardinage* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The gardens made by these famous architects (for such they appear to have been)—Le Rouge, Le Nôtre, Le Pautre, Le Blond, Le Bouteaux—Monsieur Barbier, *jardinier célèbre*, or Antoine Richard of Le petit Trianon, *jardinier de la Reine*—or those among them that remain, verging as they are to decay: with hedges thin and drawn up, neglected wildernesses and fountains out of order, still retain an indescribable charm. Old engravings of the designs for them, with their *parterres de broderie*, *parterres d'eau*,

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boulingrins, and *pavillons de verdure*, are full of graceful curves, like beautiful patterns for needlework. Modern designers can do nothing better in this line.

Still less, on the other hand, can we believe it possible that Le Nôtre himself could conceive the idea of a garden as given in the letter I copy here: "Nothing can be more absolutely unscientific than my ways, according to the usual sense of the word. I wish to gain a knowledge of all garden flowers, but only to see which can be used in a picturesque and beautiful way, and which had better be rejected and left alone. In gardening I try to paint living pictures with living flowers, paying attention to throwing them into groups both for form and colour, and so on. I am perpetually at amicable war with the gardener for over-trimmers. His grand idea is that edges must be trimmed, and all walks brushed every Saturday, while I hold the heresy of not minding a little moss on the paths, and of rather preferring a few scattered cluster rose-petals lying

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on its brown-green velvet. I wish I could show you some of my garden pictures that seem fairly successful: the Primrose Garden, lately replanted and improved as to its lines of its boundaries. I grow mostly the large yellow and white bunch primroses; and the Primrose Garden in its season is a river of gold and silver flowering through a copse of silver-stemmed young birch-trees for a hundred yards or more. Another of this year's pictures that pleased me was a large isolated group of white foxgloves with bracken about their base, backed by a dusky wood of Scotch firs."*

In the praise of gardens which is to be found scattered through the writings of many prose authors of all ages, the most careless reader cannot fail to observe a curious contrast between the older "praise" and that of more recent date. The difference, which is hard to define, lies not so much in style or in the turn of expressions; these would be but the natural outcome of differ-

* Miss Jekyll.

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ent literary periods. It lies in the mind and sentiments of the writers on the subject. The thoughts of men who loved gardens in bygone ages were coloured no doubt by the kinds of flowers commonly cultivated by them, and the rarity of many as compared with the rich increase and variety we now possess. Still, besides this, there is an unconscious poetry, a keenness of observation and sensation, and a sort of abandonment to pure enjoyment of trees and flowers and clear waters, in those earlier writings, which to us is unknown. There are quaintly minute descriptions of gardens in the times of Gawain Douglas (1400–1500) which have all the fresh flavour of poetry, and all the enduring fascination of a picture by Quintin Matsys. Even so late as last century, Addison paints the stately gardens he loved, as well as the simple delights of old-fashioned flowers, with a completeness of most finished detail. A choice style, for which modern life finds little time, and which is scarcely found in the best garden literature of to-day.

THE JOY OF GARDENS
BY R. LE GALLIENNE

THE JOY OF GARDENS

PERHAPS no word of six letters concentrates so much human satisfaction as the word "garden." Not accidentally, indeed, did the inspired writer make Paradise a garden; and still to-day, when a man has found all the rest of the world vanity, he retires into his garden. When man needs just one word to express in rich and poignant symbol his sense of accumulated beauty and blessedness, his first thought is of a garden. The saint speaks of "The Garden of God." "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse," cries the lover; or, "There is a garden in her face," he sings; and the soldier's stern dream is of a "garden of swords." The word "heaven" itself is hardly more universally expressive of human happiness than the word "garden."

And you have only to possess even quite a small garden to know why—a small, old garden. So long as it be old, it hardly matters how small it is, but old it must be, for a new garden is obviously not a garden at all. And most keenly to relish the joy which an

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old garden can give, you should perhaps have been born in a city and dreamed all your life of some day owning a garden. No form of good fortune can, I am sure, give one a deeper thrill of happy ownership than that with which one thus city-bred at last enters into possession of an old country garden. Oh, that first dewy morning when, before the rest of the house is up, you steal out into the exquisite purity and peace of the young day, mysteriously virgin in its clear-eyed freshness! Some of the strangeness of starlight still lingers in the air, and the sunlight slants over the shimmering grass with an indescribable suggestion of loneliness, a look of blended romance and pathos which seems to hint at some lost immortal meaning. Everything your eye falls upon seems to wear something of the same look; and as your eye ranges with a sumptuous sense of proprietorship from end to end of your little domain—the great oaks still sleeping in mist, the quiet shrubberies, the gossamered flower-beds, the sheets of shining lawn, the walls of mossy

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brick trellised with long-armed pear-trees, the russet-roofed outhouses—and at last rests lovingly on the warm chimneyed gables where your loved ones still lie asleep, your heart is filled with a sense of home more profound, more unshakable, and more pathetic than you have ever felt before—before you owned a garden.

Perhaps, when we analyse it, it is this deep sense of home which is the most real, the most vital, part of our joy in gardens. A house without a garden is only a temporary home. It is not immediately connected with the great life-supplying currents of the universe. To live in town, in a row of houses where all the necessities of life are delivered daily by parasitical, piratical tradesmen, is to live by proxy. It is a life where all the real work of living is done for you, and therefore not life. Till you grow your own potatoes, you do not really begin to live. You have no true home—though you may rent a charming flat. But with everything you grow for yourself and do for yourself, the

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nearer you approach the possession of a real home; for thus you become literally at home in the world. You are as immediately bred by the life-blood of the Great Mother as a deep-rooted tree, or a sturdy little spring laughing up from the foundations of the earth.

That this is no mere sentiment you can soon prove by the easy test of growing your own flowers. So soon as you cut your own roses you will wonder how you could ever have been satisfied with "bought" roses from the florist. Nothing we buy is really ours—particularly flowers. It is only the flowers we grow, or at least gather for ourselves, that are really ours. Suppose you are giving a little dinner. Of course it would save time—and perhaps even money—to send an order to the florist for some flowers for the table, but bought flowers are really artificial flowers; and if instead you have early in the day put on a pair of gardening-gloves and gone out and culled a few of your own home-reared roses, you will be surprised

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over dinner what a difference it will make. The guests may not notice the difference, but you will know; and you will have the same satisfaction as you look at your own home-made roses as you have when at breakfast you beg your friends to try some of the honey from your own honey-combs. Your guests may taste no particular reason for your being so proud of your own honey. There is even better to be bought in the shops. But let them start a garden of their own, with a row of tiny thatched bee-cottages, and they will soon understand. Naturally you love this honey more than any other honey in the world—for aren't the bees that made it your own personal tenants and friends, and don't you say "Good morning" to them every day as you go for your walk over the hill through your neighbour's clover? You know so well where the honey came from, and the rose-bushes from which you gathered these roses are as individual to you as the face of a friend.

It is with home-grown roses as with home-

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made bread and home-brewed ale. The accent must always be placed on the word "home." They grow better roses in nurseries, they bake better bread in the professional bakeries, and brewers who have made a study of the subject are said to brew better ale than you can accomplish in your antiquated coppers: but then the prefix "home" makes such a difference to the quality of fragrance and flavour. Yes? our fathers and mothers were right. Nothing is really made that is not "home"-made. And nothing can be home-made without a garden.

A garden! To grow one's own vegetables, to nurse one's own flowers, to rear one's own chickens, to milk one's own cows, and to keep one's own carriage!—this is to be personally acquainted with the universe.

All this, you may say, is to take gardens a little portentously. It is to treat of gardens with somewhat of a cosmic seriousness. Well, anyone who has a garden knows that unless you take it seriously, there is no garden.

A garden is a thing of leisurely aristocratic

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old roots and carefully escorted flowers. It brooks no forgetfulness, and will not flourish on perfunctory attentions. It has no blossoms for an absentee lover. Nothing in the world needs so much love, but nothing gives you so much pure love in return. A man really in love with a garden is perhaps safer from the usual human temptations than any other. What, indeed, is there outside his garden to compare for him with the joy and fascination he finds within? What mortal honours can weigh with him against his pride in his distinguished chrysanthemums? And woman has no seductions for the man who cannot take his eyes from his magnolias. And as for riches, no mere money in the bank can bring one-half such a sense of aggrandisement as that with which you walk a friend round your garden to show him your rhododendrons in particularly prosperous flower.

Then the mere names of certain flowers and fruits give their happy owner a sense of romantic wealth and distinction in their very mention. "I must show you our old tulip-

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tree," you say, just as the possessor of a gallery leads you off to see the portrait of one of his ancestors painted by Van Dyck or Gainsborough.

Mulberry-trees carry with them, too, a certain distinction; and think what a romantic suggestiveness there is in the words "quince" and "medlar"! Will you ever forget your thrill of happy pride when, soon after you had come into your garden, and were as yet only half aware of its hidden wealth of sleeping seed and dreaming bulb, a friend better read in the green book of nature cried out, "Why, this is a medlar!" A medlar-tree—think of it! It is like having the Order of the Garter in one's family.

And such surprises as this are among the earliest joys of possessing an old garden. You need to have lived with your garden at least a whole year before you know half it contains; for so many loving hands have been busy burying hidden treasures there long before you came. This demure out-of-the-way bed may be the coffer containing one knows

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not what precious species. Some morning you will accidentally visit that neglected corner and find the lid wide open in the morning sun. Snowdrops have a wonderful way of thus taking one by surprise. They come up through an ambush of dead leaves with the suddenness of fairies in a Christmas pantomime. And perhaps there is no wile of one's garden that so captivates one as this coquetry of surprise. To find a bed of violets you knew nothing of all in full bloom and scent is as though your sweetheart should be waiting for you in the shrubbery without your knowing it, and suddenly throw her arms around your neck. To think that she was there all the time, and you had no idea of it! And all these days the violets have been working away at ascending stem and unfolding leaf and sweetening flower. Oh, the patience and the punctuality of natural things! Maybe you have been idle these past days. Day has been added to day, and you have nothing to show for them; but meanwhile the violets have been hard at

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work, and in all your garden there has been no such thing as an idle root or leaf. But excuse this lapse into moralising. Perhaps the only fault you can find with keeping a garden is that it induces to moralising, and, if not watched, is apt to develop a sententious wisdom, such as you may have observed in gardeners. But gardeners are no part of my present subject, which, you will observe, is—the joy of gardens.

As far as possible, the lover of a garden is his own gardener. A man who leaves all the care of his garden to a paid servant is like a mother who leaves the entire care of her children to a nurse. Need I say that the pleasures of a garden are by no means only in its products, but far more in its processes? If you really love your garden, you know everything that is going on in every bed and in every corner. There is no need to read the little labels on the little pieces of split stick. When once you really know your garden, you know exactly what to expect from every inch of it, and you expect it with all

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your heart. How lovingly you set your ear to the ground to know if this or that green child of yours is awake and stirring beneath; and when the sap rises again in the old trees, you know it almost as soon as the trees themselves. It is only at first, as I said, that the snowdrops can steal a march upon you. Next year they cannot hope to take you by surprise.

Then a garden is full of little secrets and confidences which you lose if you leave it entirely to the gardener, and it brings also little cares that, if you really love it, you would not miss for the world. There are sick plants and ailing trees to think of that no one can look after like yourself, and morning by morning you visit them anxiously and carefully attend to their needs. I knew a strong man who passed for big and brutal with the rest of the world, but I once saw him with his rose-trees. A delicate grafting operation had recently been performed upon one of his favourite roses. You should have seen his face as he examined the tiny, bandaged

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limb. He could hardly have been more tender had he stood by his wife's bedside during some dangerous illness. He was not always like that, I have heard; and it is true that all a man's goodness and gentleness will sometimes thus exhaust itself through an apparently trivial outlet.

A gentleman who is responsible for one of the cruellest wars in the history of the world is known to have a passion for orchids—though those who see something evil and abnormal in the orchid, in spite of its beauty, will perhaps see a certain fitness in his taste: for that flowers impress one as having a certain secondary, spiritual—one might almost say moral—meaning, will certainly not be denied by anyone with a garden. And the impression is one which does not always seem explained by association—though, indeed, the extent to which literary association enters into our feeling for flowers and nature generally is far greater than we are at all conscious of. Shakespeare alone has made the reputations of many of our best-loved flow-

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ers; and many other flowers, dear for their own sakes, are dearer still to us because of that "laureate hearse where Lycid lies." Yet literary association is far from accounting for all we feel about certain flowers. Why, for example, do some flowers strike such a note of old-world distinction and poignant reminiscence—so much so that we call them old-fashioned flowers, though actually, of course, they are no more old-fashioned than any others? Why do stocks and wall-flowers and hollyhocks seem thus especially to breathe the fragrance and wear the air of antiquity, as though they wore ruffs and went in farthingales: and seem indeed out of place except in an old-world setting of Jacobean gables and formal walks and clipped yews; whereas geraniums unfailingly suggest the crude, neatly made garden of some modern villa? And to say this is to be reminded of an old garden quarrel which cannot be ignored by the lover of gardens: the quarrel always being waged between the formal garden and the so-called "natural" gar-

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den. To take an image from another art, as I think is permissible, a garden is at once as formal and as natural as the art of the poet is formal and natural. All art is, at least, three parts nature. But, as in the quaintly ritualistic shapes of some flowers, and the courtly attitudes of some trees, Nature herself is seen to choose, of her own accord, a ceremonial way of expressing herself, so oftentimes does poetry, as she dances her glad message from the sources of life, of her own free-will approach us in measured steps of that finished art which, as he who must have known best has told us, only nature can make. A lyric is none the less a "natural" expression because it conforms to a certain rhythmic shape, and a "yawp" is no more natural than a sonnet—in fact it is less so, for Nature is no little of a precisian, and, at all events, always insists on organic structure, and therefore form, in all her works. The quarrel between the partisans of the formal and the so-called natural gardens arises from a misconception of this truth, from an

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idea that to be "natural" you have only to be careless, or imitate in miniature certain "wild" features and broad effects of nature, the introduction of which into the limited space of a garden is incongruous, and affected to the last degree. A lion or a Polar bear would hardly be less in keeping with an English garden than some of the "natural" effects the landscape-gardener occasionally introduces there.

A garden, it must always be remembered, is an outdoor extension of the home. It is, so to speak, the green withdrawing-room. It is meant to suggest human occupation no less than the house, and not the untamed wilderness. It is no more that than your blue Persian cat is a panther. Its necessary formalism begins with the smooth-shaven lawn. Could anything be more "unnatural"? Yet even the landscape-gardener does not insist upon grass in its wild state. Of course we know how beautiful it is with its silken sworded stems and its seeded spires; but the place for it in that state of nature is the mea-

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dow, not the garden—for in the garden its purpose is that of a rich carpet, on which delicately shod ladies may walk to and fro, and dainty children may dance. It must be smooth as a sheet of paper to take accurately the white lines of the tennis-court, with its trimly strung nets and its swift-glancing players.

And so with the rest of your garden. It must be just as much natural and just as much artificial as a beautiful woman, and the precise compromise between art and nature is as difficult to hit in one case as in the other. Indeed, there can be no precise rule. Individual temperament and preference must always decide, and thus gardens should necessarily be as different in style and character as their owners. In some, the trim and the architectural, the courtly side of a garden, will be accentuated. There will not be seen a grass blade in the walks, nor a daisy on the lawn—oh, slovenliness unpardonable!—nor a rose leaf out of place, nor a tree that is not as well groomed as my lady's poodle.

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In other gardens that exuberance of green vitality against which the gardener is ever sternly on the watch, with hoe and pruning-knife and clashing shears, is permitted a license of intrusion which sometimes threatens to engulf the garden altogether. The rose-trees revel in a riotous allowance of unpruned shoots, and wind-blown seeds are allowed to form promising young republics on the lawn. The ivy does as pleases it, getting into the eyes of the windows; and if you suggest that so much of their own way is really not good for the fruit-trees, you are looked upon as a vivisectionist. You need your winter boots to walk the lawn, and if you are a wearer of skirts, must needs lift them high to guard them from the damp and the various small inhabitants of the grass that seldom hear the whirring music of the lawn-mower.

Both gardens are good in their way. For myself I like best a garden where the balance between formalism and anarchy is somewhat better struck. It seems fit, I think, that the most formal part of a garden should be that

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near the house, and that it should wander away into wildness in its distant corners. It is happily devised, I think, if, as with many English gardens, it should be walled in on three sides—the house itself counting as one of the three walls—and open to the wild country on the fourth. Your garden is thus, so to say, like an arm of the sea. It is sheltered from the undue violence of the elements, but it is also open to the great life-bringing tides. Many a fascinating waif of the old wilderness will come blown up on autumn gales through that open door, and perhaps stay awhile, with their wandering eyes, in your garden—small, storm-tossed sailors from the great deeps far out yonder—and there are always more stars to be seen at the wild end of your garden. There, too, the dew is freshest and the morning sun nearer to the heart.

It is strange, if yours is a garden like that, to steal out sometimes after sunset and walk up and down between the home end of the garden and the wild end and listen to the

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sounds at each end. At the home end what warm, human, domestic sounds float out through the windows, confidentially opened to the coming night! The day is through in the kitchen, and the servants talk and laugh together with an off-duty ease and expansiveness good to hear; from the nursery come the merry sounds of the bed-time bath and the nursery rhymes; a restful square of lamp-lit window speaks of someone within slowly sipping her coffee and a quiet book—the housewife, her cares ended, also enjoying the end of the day. The village near by also contributes its warm sounds of relaxation, which will soon be asleep.

Man went forth to his labour until the evening, and now it is evening; and the prayer of his thanksgiving sends a happy murmur up to the evening sky. Such are the sounds at the home end of the garden.

Then you wander towards the wild end of the garden, and the light seems to grow spectral, and the air haunted. Here are no warm windows or friendly human murmur, only

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whispering gleams and beckonings and half-frightened sounds calling you out, calling you away, calling you beyond. The casements of the moon are being opened. The night meaning of the world is being written all over the day meadows, and the woods are filling with witches. As the daylight fades and the stars take courage, the wild voices raise themselves out of the silence. A sudden unearthly laughter comes on the night from some far-away covert, and the night is still again. Then wicked chucklings begin here and there in the darkness, and something sighs at your elbow, and a hidden bird drops a hint of the secret, and a starbeam offers to show you the way. The night wind, perfumed with all the spices of a day's wandering, throws her arms about you, and you hear the little stream that slept all day softly serenading the evening star. Oh, you gypsies of the night!—with your wind-swept, heather-scented hair; with your waving arms, and your eyes like pools hidden in a wood; with your breath sweet as the new-

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mown field which the farmer leaves because the day is done; with your voices deep as the voice of the wind in the pines, and sweet as the voice of a nymph in a well! Oh, you gypsies of the night!

Such is the wild end of the garden.

But it is the home end of the garden that is the real garden—the end where the roses climb the warm wall and look in through the nursery window; the end where you take tea in a shady corner of the lawn, and even dine out on warm summer nights under the great mulberry-tree; the end where the children make daisy chains and play at horses and ring-a-ring-o'-roses; the end near the deep-set door in the old wall that opens into the kitchen-garden, with the asparagus and the artichokes and the strawberry-beds and the netted fruit-trees; the end near the dove-cot and the beehives and the chickens: the home end of the garden.

BY A RIVER OF THE NORTH
BY E. V. B.

BY A RIVER OF THE NORTH

“Except for fish and stane and tree,
Ae rood o’ Don’s worth twa o’ Dee.”

So goes the old Aberdeenshire rhyme, and so to this day it holds true. Beautiful Dee! Clean and crystal clear are thy hurrying waters—wild and rocky thy grandly wooded winding way! And still as we follow the little path under the trees on the steep river-bank at Maryculter, the rhyme of an old sweet song, too old-fashioned now to be remembered much, seems for ever mingling with the river’s flow:

“Oh murmuring waters, have ye no message for me?
Ye come from the hills of the west,
Where his step wanders free.
Did he not whisper my name, did he not utter oneword,
And trust that the sound o’er the rush of thy streams
might be heard.
The sounds of the moorlands I hear;
The rustling of heather and fern,
The shiver of grass on the lea,
The sigh of the wind on the hill: hast thou no voice
for me?”

Or again, those lines of haunting melody:

“What thing unto mine ear
Wouldst thou convey—what secret thing,
O wandering water, ever whispering? . . .
Thou water, O thou whispering wanderer,
What message dost thou bring?”

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The broad stream on this side runs smooth like liquid glass. Almost one can see right across to the other side the rounded stones that underlie the water. Now and again a swift shadow shoots across, lost ere it can well be fixed by the eye, for big salmon lurk in the brown deeps and shallows; but trees bend over, and the shadow of their waving branches might well deceive the eye that is not a fisher's. The pathway just now is tessellated with little round yellow autumn leaves of birch, and mottled with spotted spoil of sycamore. What an ideal tree is the sycamore! Its shape may not compare in grace with elm or beech, yet how like the tree of some ancient classic idyll. Heavy-foliaged, and casting cool dark shade, beneath which the flocks gather from the noon-day heat, or lovers tell the old, old story. Amidst of brighter summer greens, the sycamore will show itself massed in rich brown against the yellow of an evening background. With parting summer the glamour of the tree departs. For while others still shine

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gloriously gold and red, the sycamore leaves spot and shrivel and fall untimely soon. Wild cherry have already shed crimson here and there, though the green fringes of the path still are dotted with late bluebells—for wild and stormy weather there has been, when the rain drove down their leaves from the straining trees, and gentle Dee became a huge, dark, foaming torrent, terrible in its power and mass of waters. All day the cornstooks were hurried along down the eddying swirl, and under the surface the swollen tide was seen to be full of lost corn. Long after dark they who watched on the brink marked still that piteous waste of a hard-won harvest. Though most of the drowned grain would be recaptured below near the river's mouth—dried and turned to use—no poor scrap would the reapers see again of the sheaves they bound so merrily in the sunshine—that day, before the storm. Up the river there they are fatalists in their way. The corn might have been saved had they set to work in time, when *She* first came

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down, while they looked on with their hands in their pockets! The wild weather has calmed a bit since then, and hardly can one believe that this is that same raging flood of yesterday, so softly does the river go. Changeful and full of whims, like a woman, is she, with moods as diverse and as many as of any fine lady in the land. Fair though her aspect now, by nightfall clouds may gather above, and the river, with frowning face, roll drumly and dark from shore to shore. Tawny bracken glows in the sudden break, where the smell of bog myrtle or "Sweet Gale" greets one, coming from across the moss beyond the hill, where a little noisy burn rattles down into the river. The Glen has a sort of miniature grandeur—a tiny bit of scenery, varied with mountain ash and silver birch and fir-trees, and boulders tossed about; and the burn winds through it with many a cascade and little sportive waterfall. There is no sound heard save the harsh cry of an oyster-catcher as he skims away up stream, or the rush of the rapid just above the upper

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salmon pool. The one heron that haunts the place is quietly fishing among the reeds in the shallows down below the bank. I always look out anxiously for that poor fellow when near his feeding grounds, for well I know how he "holds his life in his hand," as the saying is, and how for these wary fishings, in the end, his life is bound to pay forfeit to a keeper's cruel gun. None, however, would dream of harming the sandpiper, who, earlier in the breeding season, meets one just here with his over-anxious cry, and little nervous runs hither and thither. "This is it, this is it!" he shrills out, thinking to lead the wrong way to his nest. Not always, indeed, does the sandpiper choose to nest among the thick grasses by the river's brink. Once, at least, I know that he had a nest and eggs under a raspberry bush in the kitchen-garden. Indescribable is the fascination of watching the ceaseless motion of the current circling and eddying round and round "the Kelpie's Stone." (Momentous stone where fishers take their stand!) Suddenly, close

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to it, appears a something sparkling in and out of the water. It is gone in a moment, then it comes up again a little farther down. A salmon at play is one's first thought, with the sun dazzling on its snout and white gills. But no big fish would go *down* stream like that, even in play. Up again! This time nearer in shore. And now it is clear enough that the white is the white breast of a ring-ouzel or dipper, all wet and glistening. For full five minutes the joyous creature dips up and down, running along the bottom and coming up to breathe. Wholly unalarmed by human eyes so near it, as much at home in the water as out of it, the gambols go on till it is tired, then out it runs upon the sand, shakes its feathers, and is off. Too trustful little ouzel! The enemy accuses you of deadly sin about the fish. It is a false accusation, but that is no matter; and some fatal day a shot is sure to dye your pretty white waistcoat red. In the north these small sportive spirits abound, wherever burn or broad river runs. They can glue their house in some



THE AZALEA POOL

BY A RIVER OF THE NORTH

strange way to the face of a rock above the water, and there are those who say that invariably a dry oak leaf is found within the nest.

Beyond the turn in the river—shining now like a silver track—appears in the west a glimpse of faint blue hills, the hills about Braemar. They are miles and miles away, yet the parish of Maryculter long ago stretched away as far. From high cornlands above the brae is seen the whole grand Highland mountain range. Against the gold of the dying day there they stand; ineffable, in solemn tones of indigo or violet. Fairer yet perhaps, when at noon, suffused with noonday light, they seem almost to tremble in the air, outlined dreamfully in purest lilac. And now the path stops short near a reedy backwater, the home of water-hens, and there, conspicuously placed in the middle of the weedy water, is a water-hen's nest. How, I wonder, does she learn to fore-know when the river is about to rise in flood? That the bird knows is certain; for she will

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begin in time to heap up her nest higher and higher till it reaches the point of safety. How does she tell the exact height to which the water will rise? Vain questionings. How do God's wild creatures know everything of this kind, and we, with all our reason, nothing? Turning our steps back towards the house, leaf and downward-bending branch combine in mercifully hiding for the moment the one blot that spoils the scene. A year ago it had not been thought of. Some evil enchanter's wand must have created it in the watches of some black night. The magician of the present day is commerce, and it knows not romance, and to it the name of beauty is an empty sound. So the tall mill chimney with its innate ugliness is there, and sets all the landscape out of tune. It is well built, so that no tempest may undo it. Here will it stand for ever and for ever, as long as the river flows, an eyesore and unhappiness. Let us not look that way but try to forget; and now this smiling morn stroll on, enjoying each happy interchange

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of nature's sights and sounds, holding "fresh communings with nature's finer moods," listening "as her silent voices speak their secrets in the soul's rare solitudes."

Other hours I have known when, long after sunset, one would hardly care to loiter, but rather haste along this narrow lonely way, pursued by the sob of the westland winds. The sky is heavy with clouds gathering in a low wide arch above the dim and melancholy west; and the river moves stilly, reflecting back neither dark cloud nor evening gold, flowing on and on, lurid and grey. On such an eve in the drear afterglow, from across the river when winds have dropt, straight from the low black line of firs that crest a rising ground on the other side, will sometimes float across the faintest refrain of a grieving plaint of former far-off years—a dim, forlorn murmur of strange voices—the hum as of a distant town. And then will arise a distant low sough of the wind shuddering through the pines; while the belated wayfarer turns his face the other way and

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quicken his homeward steps. That ghostly feeling of the hour comes not unseldom to dwellers in our North country, where still lingers on into modern life many a fragment of old superstitions, even as wild heather will linger upon some stony unploughed hillock in a field that has once been moorland. Those black firs mark the site of Agricola's camp, the great Roman encampment of Devanha; it is called in these days "Normandykes," a name which dates from times long after, when the Romans for the moment were forgot. To this day the lines of the immense square can be discerned in a broad green dyke, or built-up road, broken and uneven, and rough with ancient mossy stones. Along the breadth of it, at the top, there was room to drive a chariot and horses. Here Agricola and his army lay encamped. From the farthest angle westward they watched the Picts, entrenched on the distant hill of the Barmekyn of Echt. Seventeen long centuries have run their course since the day when the Roman legions, disheartened and

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in sorry plight, marched out from Devanha Camp for the last time, leaving their dead—where to this hour they lie—near the southernmost corner. The pointed spires of fir stand in serried phalanx where Roman spears were uplifted ages ago, and the Roman's work has melted away like "the fabric of a dream." Where the earth lay beaten bare with trampling of armed men and horses in those far years, now grows the green deep-cushioned moss, spangled in summer with white stars of winter-green. The soldiers' clang and noise with all their military life and movement had long ceased, more than a thousand years. The narrow rill that still runs past the camp into the Dee is no more called "the Bluidy Streape"; it is known by a more modern name—only about seven hundred years old—as the "Tempill burn," from the Knights Templars, who once possessed these lands. There is nothing left of the great Roman square except these broken lines. A little thatched cottage leaning up against the old dyke is built with the last re-

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maining entire fragments of the stones, after the most of them had been carted away to build and repair neighbouring farmhouses. The well sunk by the Romans is there beside the cottage, and there the cottager's children play; but the water has been conveyed away in pipes to another place. It is not many years since it remained the same as the Roman soldiers left it.

A labourer once found in the camp a relic which came into the possession of a fine old tenant-farmer of Maryculter. It was "the sword of Andrea Pereira." (So he described it, from the name engraved upon the blade.) The man had tried to make a screw out of it, but found the iron too soft, so all that was left of the sword was saved. The same old farmer also carefully treasured the key of the Templars' ancient Church of St Mary the Virgin.

Through embowering trees we follow the narrow way that leads back to the old house of Maryculter. Though so close by the river it is almost hid in trees, so that hardly a

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chimney nor a corner of it can be seen from the opposite bank. Pigeons, white and grey, sit basking on the roof. They sit in regular order, five or six on either side of the stone moulding, crenellating it in brilliant white against the blue. On a little crow-stepped gable of the oldest wing of the house an aged weathercock still follows the wind, veering round with uncanny creak, shining like gold when touched by the sun. The device is the Gordon family crest, a bow and arrow in an archer's grasp, the arrow pointed on a full-strung bow. Pointed to each quarter whence blows the wind, the bow is ready to shoot and trust to fortune: "*Fortuna Sequatur.*" Before the woods were grown, in the beginning of the century, the then Laird of Maryculter, General Gordon, journeying there from his distant castle of Fyvie, would catch sight of the gleam on the weathercock while yet a good way off, down the long approach to the house. The laird used to travel with his team of oxen conveying the luggage and servants in waggon. The vast stone stable

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at Maryculter where his oxen were stabled still exists. Slits in the heavy walls gave light and air within. There were festivities there the other day, when the new laird, Sir Cosmo Gordon, came home to his inheritance; and the grand tenants' ball then given was held in the building where the oxen used to be. Could the beasts of those old days have previsioned such a gay scene, as they rested in their stalls and chewed the cud in peace, how great would have been their bewilderment! The new house with the crow-stepped gable, built by General Gordon, was added on to one more ancient. The Templars in their time, from 1127 for 123 years after, possessed broad lands (some 8000 acres) in Maryculter.*

In those days they built a preceptory, of which a part still remains within the more recent walls. Curiously little were the rooms with which men were then so well content!

*And even to this day "the Maltese Cross" of their successors to the property, the Knights of Malta, cut in stone, is found at times; marking the division of their estate into different portions.

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There is one, narrow, and lined now with panels of Jacobean date, at the head of a steep small stair in the oldest bit of the house; this is traditionally known as the Council Chamber. Years ago the door of it in black oak was carried away to a farmhouse near. Standing at the head of these stairs, or stepping up or down, a ghostly priest has been heard and seen—but never a Templar Knight! Down below is the kitchen, with vaulted roof and a huge fireplace, discovered by taking down a partition. The oven, on one side complete, is vaulted with beautifully fitted stones, and when discovered was still filled with sand for baking, and the chimney still black with smoke. Wherever else the builders of old saved space, they never spared it in their kitchen chimneys! Not more than a stone's throw from the house, on the river bank where the ground rises a little eastward of the beechgrove, stood the Templars' church; a little church, dedicated to St Mary Virgin. It was made so strong and stout, that long after

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the last of the Templars' lands had been feued away and parted between some of the great neighbouring lairds—generations after the order had been suppressed, and the Knights had gone away—right into the last century and even up to near its close, the little old church remained still the Parish Church of Maryculter. The same old farmer who had the Roman sword (he was born the day that Nelson died and Trafalgar was won) remembers to have seen in his youth the man who was employed “to ding down the church.” It seems to have wanted a lot of “dinging down,” so sound were the walls; to this day, so thick and strong the existing remnants.

It was in 1787 that the Lords of Session in Edinburgh ordained its destruction, and in that year the ancient church was “described to be sold by auction and transported, and the price applied, so far as it will go, to the building of the new church and churchyard.” The parish and the lately appointed minister were impatient for its removal, and

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the action of the Session prompt. So the ungodly auction was held, and the doomed church of St Mary sold, and many old moss-grown stones of it carted off a mile away up to the hamlet on the hill, over-against the rushing burn of Corbie. Some are yet alive who can mind upon having seen a good deal more of the ruin than the few stones now remaining. It is not so very many years ago since last the morning sun illumined a remaining fragment of the eastern gable, sending a shaft of glory through the empty tracery of the window across the chancel floor, just above the spot which long had been the Pitfodels' family burial-place.* Long after the auction, however, Pitfodels died and was buried far away in Edinburgh. I remember him when I was a child of four; a very old man, in a long snuff-coloured coat and wig—a very embodiment of snuff.

All that now is left of the Templars' church is a mere sketch of its outline. There are the

*John Menzies of Pitfodels had sold the estate to General Gordon of Fyvie.

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big foundation stones, with here and there a piece of the ruined wall about two or three feet high. Rounded granite boulders at the corners are half hid under moss and grass and fern. Very small is the space between these lines; at most ten paces across. A few fragments of worked freestone lying about; a few deeply moulded segments of arch or doorway, show how the construction of the church was the simplest Norman. The freestone scattered round, and the mouldings of red porphyry, must have been brought from a great distance. Nature's sweet charity has here excelled itself, clothing the broken outlines with rich mantling of fine short herbage set with a lovely small growth of wood-strawberry and cranesfoot and potentilla, and many another spreading wildflower. Two or three yews in the full luxuriance of comparative youth fill up the chancel, and seedling ash and sycamore are there. Into the very centre of a tall gean (wild cherry) a dogrose climbs, and falling back in downward festoons tells its rosary of scarlet hips;

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and there in calm autumn days the redbreast sings, trying its notes for winter use. The south doorway with well-worn threshold may still be traced. Soft green grasses cover it deep, the wild rabbit wears a tiny pathway through them, and where once the bases of the entrance pillars stood, now nestle bluebells and blue veronica. The nave is full; it is never empty. Deep silence and the stillness of the grave reigns with the congregation gathered there. After they have entered in, none return or go out; summer and winter, day and night, there they lie still and rest. Until about twenty years ago, when they were sent back to the West Kirk of Aberdeen, two stone effigies of a knight and a lady lay on a broad ledge in the chancel. A hundred years before they had been secretly conveyed away for safety to this sequestered spot. Scant care in former years did the ruin of St Mary the Virgin get, and very rough was the usage of its graveyard. Flocks of sheep and herds of cattle broke through the fences and pastured there, tread-

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ing with heavy foot the ancient layer-stones. Children, unreprieved, made it their playground. Once indeed, as tradition tells, a pack of hounds *loupé* the dyke and killed amongst the graves. Even after those days, after a big stone wall had enclosed it all round with a locked gate, the grass grew tall and rank, and melancholy nettles had it all their own way, till it felt most like a grey home of ghosts. Years fled past, and then some who remembered came and tenanted the old house, and the place grew to be loved more and more, and tenderest care was lavished upon it. Fresh flowers were laid there, and the grass took on a brighter green. And so onward through years of change the character of the place has changed; the ghosts have fled, and now it is like to some "haunt of ancient peace," in whose deep calm gloom enters not. Many an hour of strange visionary pleasure have I spent within that dim enclosure. . . .

It is a beautiful day—one of these perfect September days of soft blowing breeze, white

BY A RIVER OF THE NORTH

clouds, and sapphire sky we know so well in the North of Scotland. The stillness is so profound that the little tapping of a titmouse in the trees is heard distinct and clear. Under the deep shade of the beech-grove a narrow door above the river leads from the lawn into the untroubled quiet of the deserted churchyard. There is a pattering like heavy raindrops on the crisp ivy-leaves. It is only a squirrel frisking up and down among the branches, cracking his beech-nuts and scattering down the husks. Here, when we have entered and shut-to the door, it is as if our tie to the outward world were of a sudden snapt. The stock-dove's murmurous chant from her green twilight in the wooded distance—or the multitudinous passing, with wild clamour, low overhead, of a company of young rooks, does but heighten the feeling of remote seclusion which penetrates this small in-walled space. Tall trees without keep half of it perennially in shade. The other half lights up at noon, though never a daisy has been ever known to cheer the grass.

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To-day the daisies are not missed, for young Autumn gives of her bounteous store and spares not her burnished gold. I know of nothing quite like this tomb-crowded place, excepting that ancient burial-ground without the walls at Nuremberg. The grey old headstones crowd tottering around, like storm-tossed ships in a rough sea of green. Hardly one of them stands upright; all awry, they lean this way and that, alternating with the horizontal slant of broad table-tombs. At night, under the moon, when snow lies heaped between black shadows, it is just a weird disordered army of gaunt forms, and the ruin in the midst is then, "Our Lady of the Sna'."* Even for one who loves it well it would feel uncanny to do more than glance in at the moonlit space while holding the door half-open, and then, with a shudder, shut and lock it fast. In the blue of a summer's day how different! Then, the whole place is overlaid with moss and delicate flowering grasses, and the grey stones would seem

*There was an ancient chapel in Aberdeen so dedicated.

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almost to smile under their veil of sweet calm sunshine. The squirrel, tired of nutting in the tree-tops, has come down, and skips across the green hillocks holding a beech-nut in his mouth. He comes up quite close without any fear, supposing the loiterer to be a stone like the rest. In a moment the tiny forepaws are busy scratching up the moss, and his nut is lightly buried. A quick glance round, and he's off like a thought scrambling away up the ivied wall. It is a solitude filled with death, yet fraught with life. Greenfinches, greener than the leaves, chirp and play amongst the branches, and many another wild bird makes here its home, besides the leafy "choirs invisible," for whom through all the long days of June this is a chosen retreat. Down amongst the mounds the mould-warp, "the demon mole," is ever silently at work. Beech-nuts are nought to him; he labours in another line. Ever so alone as one may be here, never is there felt any sense of loneliness or gloom—unless if perchance one stumbles upon a

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molehill, and in the freshly-turned earth, half uncovered lies—a *rusted nail*. Then, the whole sad human story is laid bare, and for a time the summer's sun is dulled. A little stone-built house in the south-east corner has one little window with outlook on the churchyard. There is nothing gruesome in its aspect, yet it here remains a link with lawless days, when the new-made grave had to be watched all night. Many of these little watch-houses still exist in the corners of old churchyards throughout the country. One such I know with two portholes in the wall whence muskets might be fired.

Once it happened, on a chill November day, from underneath the blackness of a yew tree, there suddenly crept out feebly and shivered at my feet, a little starving ring-dove. Too weak to be afraid, the dove let itself be gathered up and warmed in the hand and carried into the house kitchen and fed and healed, for there was discovered a wide, square-shaped, gaping wound. Nigh half of the poor bird's breast had been cut

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away to the bone. Nothing ever afterwards came to light, nor was any reply returned to the inquiries we made, nor any explanation of how a bird so weak and sorely stricken could have found strength to fly across the broad waters of the Dee. But some there were who heard the story, and secretly remembered the Providence that hears the young raven's cry; and well they understood, a Hand had guided the flight of the wretched dove and led it to seek sanctuary in the ruins of St Mary Virgin.*

Many a studious hour have I spent spelling out records of the generations that lodge here in the City of Silence, until at last it has seemed as though they were all my own familiar friends and acquaintances. I know their names, and the names of their fathers and mothers and wives and children, and their ages, and the dates of their birth and death, and where they lived and died. As for the sound of their voices, and how they

*At this date (1898), eight years after, the dove is alive and happy.

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looked and how they were clothed—fancy makes all that clear! Every story told here is a simple story—though now and then it breaks off at some little old forgotten mystery which none can read. These records of the past have surely been kept with no common care and with most rare beauty! The green lettering on the stones has taken very long to complete—a hundred years, or more—and beautiful exceedingly is each finished masterpiece. It is done in *niello* of emerald moss filling in the deep-cut letters. But Time and Nature, so exquisite in their touch, at one point fail. They never know where to stop. After their work has once begun, there comes not any pause. Another few years, and that which now we so wholly admire will be over-done—the bright velvet-green words will have become illegible. This velvet-moss in time grows a little branchy, spreading and thickening, till at last nothing will show save a plain green pall. Even more delicately decorative are the grey lichens creeping in rounds and rings all over the

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recumbent slabs and upright stones, hiding their surface under silvery tones of grey and interchanging orange. Lichen, however, is remorseless: it will obliterate the longest sentences! From the few (only one or two) more recent intruders of tall polished granite and gilded legend—with what deep refreshment the eye returns to the old last-century table-stones! Compared with our glaring modern fashions of cheap white marble, or even of polished granite, in how sharp contrast is the chill monotony of these hoary monuments!

It was the old man that does the mowing who meditatively remarked to us one day—leaning like old Time upon his scythe—“It is a verra solemn place.” (I wish he had not added, “Seems summat to look at when it’s cleaned up!”) Solemn as the place is, yet to some it is as a delightful story-book.

The oldest of the stones dates not further back than 1696. Close by the south door, just where church-going feet of long ago have worn away the threshold Sabbath after

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Sabbath, this old slab lies flat on the ground. When first unearthed, it was found hidden under and deeply overgrown with turf. The inscriptions, though originally well carved in relief, had become almost illegible. These, however, are the words that patience at last made out:

1696

Here lyes ane
Honest Vertvovs
Man John Mov
at who lived
in Roth NECK
And Departed this
life of age . . . years.
(illegible)

Here lyes
ane Honest and
virtvovs wo
man Margret
spovse of aforesaid
Departed Nov. the 14
of age 87 years.

The quaint division of the words had to be, in order to get in the two records in the space at the upper end of the narrow seven-foot long layer-stone. All the rest is devoted to hour-glasses, cross-bones, spades, and skulls.* The phrase "ane Honest Vertvovs

* "John Mowatt of Old Aberdeen made me 1765. Sabbaths I proclaim. Funerals I toll," is the inscription on the old church bell of Durris. This J. Mowatt may have been a descendant. The bell named "Scatter-vengeance" might also have been his work.

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Man" seems to have fallen into disuse after 1722. There is after that nothing more said of honesty or virtue; it became maybe an understood thing. It must have been by some perversity of fate that "Margret Movat" came to be the *only* woman so described in this place! One calls to mind the great Master Cynic's verdict—supposing its meaning to be thus understood—"a thousand men have I found, and not one woman among all these " Yet here is the honest, virtuous Margret shining alone amongst dozens of the men-kind! Family histories may be traced or fancied, as we read the homely names and dates recorded on these fast-wasting, crowded stones. They are long and large, made thus with a thrifty foresight, for then one stone may hold the names of several generations. Indeed the lengthening roll may stretch all down from the top to the very grass, and then run over on the other side, ending up satisfactorily with So-and-so, "the last of the family." On the very verge of the gravel path, near a

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big stone of 1770, broken in half and leant up against the wall, one stumbles over a flat grey stone of fine, very hard grain, that well resists the weather. The carving is in high relief, worked with wonderful skill and finish, and the words are evenly and clearly cut. Evidently money was not spared, and the work was the best that could be got at the time. Under the initials "M. F." there is a very short inscription; only this: "Here lyes the body of Margaret K—— [initial only] Lawful daughter to Mary Findlay. She died Feb. 1, 1747, aged 15." That is all. Surely there is some sad, forgotten story hinted in those few words! a story never now to be unfolded. Poor child. What painful care her mother lavished in surrounding her with the ghastliest symbolism! The whole large space below the inscription is filled up with the most favourite emblems of the day, as hopeless and full of despair as sad heart could desire. The sculptures are done from the very life. There is the skull, the hour-glass, the pair of cross-bones, the spade and

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shovel. Contrary to custom, the death's-head turns mournfully aside, its countenance almost as pathetic as that in Albert Dürer's engraving of "The Knight, Death, and the Devil." The crossed bones are ghastly in their reality, and the hour-glass is a little squat delightful thing one would give worlds to possess. Each stern detail is perfect. And this was the best a mother's love could devise for the adornment with due honour of her child's last bed—Death, Time, and the Grave! No upward thought implied, no faith in the peace of God in Paradise. As to those old-world hour-glasses, where are they? They were in use in every house, and some now living can remember houses where no other clocks were known, not much more than twenty years ago. Death trophies, grim and unrelenting, covering the half of almost every old stone in the place, were "the right thing," and remained in fashion up to the latter part of the eighteenth century. Then came a reaction. Cross-bones and sexton's implements were discarded

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first, and people began to be shy of a too crude expression of ideas about the End, and doom and inevitable decay. Then crept in words that bore some brief touch of Hope or Resignation, and these increased in number, until now they glitter in gaudy gilt letters upon polished granite; and here too, as everywhere else, the simplicity of the little old cemetery, or "place to sleep in," is interfered with by the glare of bead flowers under glass. In these days we seem to make believe that we may pass lightly over from Passage Perilous to the Fair Havens beyond! The oldest amongst my silent friends here, or rather, their families for them, left scarce any visible sign of any spiritual hope that may have been theirs. One alone I find, where it stands apart, darkly overshadowed by the trees. It is a plain, great table-stone—older by many years than poor Mary Findlay's sepulchral masterpiece—and upon it, most clearly cut, are these few words: "Here lyes in the Hope of a Glorious Resurrection, Andrew Donald. August 1712 and

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of age 63 years." To him the supreme moment came, undrest of all its terror. Far away through the dark vista of a hundred and eighty years, one seems to see the man, as he lay with Heaven's light upon his brow, and in his heart the thought, "O grave, where is thy victory?" That old grey stone under the yew-trees absolutely glows out of the gloom. And there is the sound of a word in my ear, some old saying, heard I know not where:

"Life that shall send a challenge to the End,
And when it comes, say, Welcome, Friend."

Not far from Andrew Donald, John Duncan "lies interred"; "who lived respected as an honest man, which is the noblest work of God." His date is 1771, and he lived sixty years. James Cantray, another of my silent friends (1789), lived once in Hog-hillock of Netherby. (The local names are quaint!) 1702 inscribed above the name could not refer to his birth, for he only lived fifty-eight years. Alexander Ethershank, "late smith in Granesacre," was a fine fellow in his day.

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His stone is done in first-rate style, with a carven crown of glory and a sturdy smith's hammer underneath. He left off work in August 1770, aged seventy-one. Not till seven years after was the stone set up, and then was added, "Likewise his children, Alex, Anne, Will, Mary, and William." They always lost a lot of children in those days; and young and old "departed" mostly in early spring and autumn. I am attracted to Isobel M'Ercher by her pretty Spanish-sounding Christian name. It is not uncommon here, and is as musical as Hellon (for Helen) is the reverse. Another friend, James Henderson, is worthy of sincere regard and esteem. After he had prospered in life as a manufacturer in Aberdeen, he did not in his prosperity forget his old father ("a farmer in Westerton of Greenhill for upwards of forty years, who died in 1810, aged eighty"), nor his father's youngest son—the brother, who died in his youth when he was but fourteen. James erected a tall upright stone to the memory of both. Plenty of room was left

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for his own name, but no one took the trouble to record it. Perhaps he, too, was "the last of the family." Very seldom do uncertainties of spelling occur, common as these are in many a last-century document. On the table-stone of the Silver family, in the shadows of the east end of the church, we see that Janet Fergusson, spouse to W. Silver, "*depaired* the 13th. of March 1715 and of age thirty-three years." Poor Mr Silver, the father, has no record at all, his own lawful half of the two tablets having been economically used up for the eldest married daughter. It is one of the little mysteries that are not rare among my friends of St Mary's. Near the postern door, in the wall leading out upon the river bank, is another of them. Low in the ground, where the autumn leaves drift deep, overhung by long fronds of lady-fern and weighed down into the earth by its own weight, lies the heavy layer-stone I mean. It may be a fond fancy only; but always it seems to me that around it broods an air of gentle pathos. No sign of inscrip-

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tion or of graven picture can be made out until the thick moss that overgrows the stone is scraped aside. Then there comes to light a skilfully worked oval with date 1744, and the initials M. H. in boldly carved italics. Just below the oval is the pair of arched tablets, like Moses' Tables of the Law such as used to be in churches, for the names of husband and wife. Here, however, the space remains entirely blank and empty. Underneath, and just above the usual death-trophies, are the words, "Margaret Henderson, their only daughter. She died Sept. 17, 1743." Their only daughter! But whose? The unwritten space which should have been filled in with her parents' names was never used. Yet from its size and careful sculpture one would think this had been intended to become a family stone. Perhaps the old people went away, and the place where they had dwelt remembered them no more. They and their sorrow were forgot. The alto-relievi seem to be by the same hand that worked for Mary Findlay two years after.

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The sculpture of them is exceptionally fine, and there is the same squat hour-glass as in hers. The artist may have been a farmer living not very far off, one Mr Cresswell, who is described thus in the Statistical Account, 1794: "He could not form a single letter with the pen, yet he made a few tombstones with very fine engravings upon them." (Do our Board Schools ever turn out a genius like that?) Elspit Trupp, spouse to James Collie, tenant in "Cairngressie," arrived here much later, in 1826. Elspit was a character in her day. Something of a shrew, I think. One knows that instinctively. There she stands at her door in her "high-cauled cap,"* busily knitting and gossiping with the neighbours or ordering James Collie about. I can see her plainly! He, good man, was a douce sort. He didn't presume to outlive his wife more than four years, and his departure was of no consequence whatever. He is briefly

*Old Scotch nurse's song:

"Oh, that I had a little starch and blue
For my high-cauled cap, for my high-cauled cap!"

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alluded to in a corner. Poor young Andrew Williamson lived in Mains of Porteachen, and it was in the middle of the merry month of May that he went away. The spring was pouring floods of green on the budding trees in woods and fields about Porteachen, and the singing of birds was heard in the land, while in his father's house all faces were darkened—for a young man lay there, dead in his prime. He has a big stone all to himself, bedecked with all and more than the accustomed *memento mori*.

Always the more profound the sorrow, the sterner is the expression of it in this place. The greater grief, the grimmer cross-bones. And Andrew has them displayed in all their glory! The words of the inscription run into one another, in the curious way common at that date, thus:

HERELYESAN	SONWHOLIVED	OFFORTEACH	EDMATHE	ANDOPHIS
DREWILLIAM	INMAINS	ENANDDEPART	I4DAYI722	AGE22YEARS

One more note, and then we round the corner into the nineteenth century. There is a low stone recording the name of "Mar-

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garet Rait," spouse of a tenant in "Wester Auchlounies"; she is the only one of the name here. There's nothing in a name, yet at times, how much! With the name, the power of association calls back as in a vision the gaunt ruin of the Castle of Rait.* Haunted by its terrible tradition, the scene once seen long ago looms gloomily afar. The castle is founded upon a rock, yet it has not stood. Three roofless shattered walls forlornly pierced by empty windows and their broken transoms are all that remain of it; and the sky looks down upon a dismal hollow place of heaps and wildering thorns. Wintry winds moan through and through with a sound of bitter wailing. Late autumn suns glow with lurid light upon the walls, and summer's belated flowers bloom sweetly at their foot, between the rocks and tumbled boulders. Not alone has stress of time and tempest rent and ruined the ancient stronghold. A curse is there, that "says as plain as whisper in the ear, the place is haunted."

*Near the town of Nairn.

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The story of Rait Castle lives but in dim traditions of the countryside. They tell of the chief of the Cummings' fatal feast, and how his guests of the Clan Chattan were to be treacherously slaughtered. All is ready as the Mackintoshes troop up the hill. Courteously they are welcomed and the banquet is begun, and loud the revelry wore on into the night. Suddenly the skirl of bagpipes shrills through the din of song and laughter resounding on the stair—and one enters bearing a ghastly dish—a black bull's head. Then the silent toast is given, "The Memory of the Dead," and at the signal the clan rise up to draw their swords each man upon his guest at his side. But Cumming's daughter had secretly forewarned young Mackintosh, her lover; and every Mackintosh had his dirk ready, hid under his plaid. Out flashed the blades as with a yell of derision the Mackintoshes flung themselves on the traitors, and plunged their daggers into their hearts. None but the Cummings' chief escaped alive; and he, mad with rage, sprang up to the tur-

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ret where his daughter had taken refuge, and as she flew to the window, trying to leap out and escape from her maddened father, with his broadsword he struck off both her hands. . . . From that night of horror, ever after Rait has been desolate. Centuries have rolled away, the cruel tragedy is forgot—only the blood-stained ruin on the hill stands in solitary, silent witness.

Soon after the close of the eighteenth century a marked change in the storied stones of Maryculter has begun. All superfluous *the's* and *and's* are dropped, and ere half the century ends the more homely "spouse" or "spowse" is exchanged for "wife," and the whole simplicity of wording by which we come to know what manner of men were those fine old Scotsmen in their generation, ceased for ever. Their simple directness of character may account for the well-nigh entire absence (as I said before) of all expression of religious hope. "God's Errand-Ghost," the Rider on the Pale Horse, has passed by that way, and one in the house—

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it may be the most loved of all—is dead. There is no shirking of that bare truth, no attempt to soften it. The sands are run out; the hour-glass laid down on its side—the spade and shovel have to be taken up. . . . Then came tall upright stones with plain rounded tops; and while all tokens of mortality were put on one side, the future is al-luded to only with dull conventionality. The inscriptions are less deeply incised upon the stone, the meaning more condensed; and whereas there had used to be no evasion of a man's calling or where he lived, whether gardener or smith, crofter or shoemaker, such minor points as these were now kept dark.

Chiefly must we regret the lost expression, common in older times, “hereunder lyeth.” It is used by Tennyson:

“Old yew whose fibres grasp the stones
That name the underlying dead.”

It would be presumption to count the Reverend Mr Glennie in the list of my more familiar acquaintance: he is so very learned!

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And his epitaph, all in Latin, stretches the full length from end to end of his great plain table-stone. No such grim follies as were just then passing out of vogue disturb its dignity. It tells his virtues; and that he fell on sleep at the age of eighty-one, Dec. MDCCCI. It begins *Viro Reverendo* and it ends *Placido animum efflavit*; which sounds rather poetical. He was minister of Dalmaik (pronounced Drumoak), from thence transferred to Maryculture—so he wrote the name—where he served for thirty-nine years. In his time the ancient church of the Knights Templars was destroyed; and I fear that to him it was no great heartbreak when the new kirk was set up close to his own snug manse on the hill. He wrote about his parish in those most fascinating volumes, *The Statistical Account of Scotland*, in 1793. There was a twinkle of dry humour about the canny old Scotch minister that must have come out at times in his long sermons, and is not entirely absent from his statistics; as when he says the people are generally sober

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and industrious, "and must be œconomical as they cannot afford luxuries, &c." Yes, we seem to know the minister better than we do most of his congregation, crowding under the green grass around him. He took pride in the stature of his men parishioners, "some being six feet two inches in height," and in the long age that some attained. "A widow who died last year (1792) at the age of 102 years, and a man at the advanced age of 104." The parish kept up its reputation of longevity, for "Euphemia Arther, whose late husband was sometime farmer in Greenhead," died at 102 in 1823, while near by lies an old man of 101. The later note seems almost identical with the earlier; yet there is no mistaking the difference of dates. Curious and interesting to us in the nineteenth century are some of the items of parish history collected by the minister. Labourers were paid eightpence to tenpence a day, and statute labour was both exacted in kind and commuted for money. Some of the worst pasture let at fivepence an acre. There were

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twenty-eight plough-gates of land, and the produce of the parish more than supplied the inhabitants with provisions. There was one coach, one waggon, and forty or fifty carts. The minister is very much interested in the spinning and knitting of worsted stockings, "the general employment of all females from seven years old and upwards, and the cheapest are accounted the most profitable both for workers and merchant." In 1782-3, many lived very hardly and sparingly in this parish. The kirk-sessions bought meal and pease in Aberdeen "when they could be got," and distributed. There was a decline of population, partly owing to there being no more peat for fuel. He himself, at great expense, had rendered arable ten acres of land. (Maryculter was mostly green hills in those days.) Mr Glennie kept an academy for "young gentlemen from the Indies and America," and his brief account of Mariæ Cultura (which he states to be the original orthography) ends thus: "No turn-pikes are needed or wished for in the parish." There

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are no natural productions noted excepting "some small deer of the roe kind" in Kingcausie woods, no allusion to the Templars, nor the Knights of St John, nor to any antique traditions. The Corbie burn runs through a ravine and under the hill where the minister dwelt, tumbling headlong when in spate with far-heard uproar down into the brown seething pool of the Corbie Pot. But Mr Glennie gives no heed to the haunting fairy of the waterfall; nor does he heed the armed knight who on stormy nights is known to gallop full speed across the glen; nor the unhappy Moorish maiden's blue jewel that sometimes glitters with a spectral light in the open field when all is dark. . . . Such trifles would ill become his academic gravity! And so we take our leave of John Glennie, Minister.

About four years before his departure, in 1777, W. Milne, in one of the only two attempts in this place at rhyme, tells that he is "from care and trouble scett free," and exhorts his friends to "mind on your sins,

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thinck not on me." The admonition savours
a little of the familiar lines:

"God takes the good, too good on earth to stay,
And leaves the bad, too bad to take away."

How pleasant after this to recall the old
mariner's epitaph near the sands within
sound of the sea, at Foveran on the east
coast, and common in nearly the same words
at many other kirk-yards by the sea:

"Though Boreas' blasts and Neptune's waves
Have tossed me to and fro,
In spite of both by God's decree
I harbour here below;
Here at an anchor I do lie
With many of our fleet,
Till once again we do set sail
Our Admiral, Christ, to meet."

Seldom now is the door of this quiet world
undone to admit a new arrival, so few are the
surviving families who still possess the right.
A cross, almost the only one in the place, is
set on the summit of the ivied reredos of a
little iron-railed close, where throughout the
year the turf is kept green and smooth.
Sometimes one who remembers will come
there and leave a few flowers. Hereunder

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rests, awaiting the resurrection of the just, Alexander Gordon, the old Laird of Ellon, once of Auchlunies. He slept in his ninetyeth year, 1872. By his side lies the mother of his children with two infant daughters. Other four children of that family have since gone their way, but only their names are here. Richard, the sailor lad who was lost at the wreck of H.M.S. *Challenger* (by her ship's crew fondly called "The Never"). He perished in the stormy surf that raged upon the Molquilla rocks of Chili, May 1835, "having volunteered a dangerous service essential to the safety of his shipmates." The gallant boy was but nineteen. . . . Years later a soldier brother gained distinction by his calmness and courage in another wreck, where all were saved. Bertie Gordon was then a young captain in the 91st Highlanders (which he afterwards commanded), in charge of troops on board the troopship *Abercrombie Robinson*. It was in Table Bay, in that great storm which wrecked the *Birkenhead*.*

*Feb. 25, 1852.

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Gordon so ordered the disembarking and his influence so told with the troops, though the most of them were but raw recruits—that at his bidding they formed in line on the opening decks, and stood silently waiting their turn till the boats had been filled and returned again and again, and every woman and child had been got safe to shore. Then the troops left, and directly after the last boat left her side she went to pieces. And all the time the emigrant ship *Waterloo* in that terrible sea was breaking up and all hands lost, almost under the very eyes of the young soldiers on the *Abercrombie Robinson*. . . . Truly there's grit in the Gordons, and it came out strong in the old laird's sons! And that little peaceful green shines with a memory of the "the gallant Gordons."

The last time I visited St Mary Virgin, moss had so thickened there, that many of the "engravings" could scarcely be made out. On one stone, once brave with angels and lilies and armorial bearings, the surface had shaled off, so that little of its sculpture was

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left. Another was coated deep with silvery lichen. Soon Time will have obliterated every last trace of the Invisible Host—my friends—even their very names, once carved with so much care on the old grey stones of Maryculter.

MY OWN GARDEN. BY
ALEXANDER SMITH

M Y O W N G A R D E N

THE house I dwell in stands apart from the little town, and relates itself to the houses as I do to the inhabitants. It sees everything, but is itself unseen, or, at all events, unregarded. My study-window looks down upon Dreamthorp like a meditative eye. Without meaning it, I feel I am a spy on the on-goings of the quiet place. Around my house there is an old-fashioned rambling garden, with close-shaven grassy plots, and fantastically clipped yews which have gathered their darkness from a hundred summers and winters; and sundials in which the sun is constantly telling his age; and statues green with neglect and the stains of the weather. The garden I love more than any place on earth; it is a better study than the room inside the house which is dignified by that name. I like to pace its gravelled walks, to sit in the moss-house, which is warm and cosy as a bird's nest, and wherein twilight dwells at noonday; to enjoy the feast of colour spread for me in the curiously shaped floral spaces. My garden, with its silence and the pulses of

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fragrance that come and go on the airy undulations, affects me like sweet music. Care stops at the gates, and gazes at me wistfully through the bars. Among my flowers and trees Nature takes me into her own hands, and I breathe freely as the first man. It is curious, pathetic almost, I sometimes think, how deeply seated in the human heart is the liking for gardens and gardening. The sickly seamstress in the narrow city lane tends her box of sicklier mignonette. The retired merchant is as fond of tulips as ever was Dutchman during the famous mania. The author finds a garden the best place to think out his thought. In the disabled statesman every restless throb of regret or ambition is stilled when he looks upon his blossomed apple-trees. Is the fancy too far brought that this love for gardens is a reminiscence haunting the race of that remote time in the world's dawn when but two persons existed—a gardener named Adam, and a gardener's wife called Eve?

When I walk out of my house into my gar-



THE OLD-FASHIONED RAMBLING GARDEN

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den I walk out of my habitual self, my everyday thoughts, my customariness of joy or sorrow by which I recognise and assure myself of my own identity. These I leave behind me for a time, as the bather leaves his garments on the beach. This piece of garden-ground, in extent barely a square acre, is a kingdom with its own interests, annals, and incidents. Something is always happening in it. To-day is always different from yesterday. This spring a chaffinch built a nest in one of my yew-trees. The particular yew which the bird did me the honour to select had been clipped long ago into a similitude of Adam, and, in fact, went by his name. The resemblance to a human figure was, of course, remote, but the intention was evident. In the black shock head of our first parent did the birds establish their habitation. A prettier, rounder, more comfortable nest I never saw, and many a wild swing it got when Adam bent his back, and bobbed and shook his head when the bitter east wind was blowing. The nest in-

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terested me, and I visited it every day from the time the first stained turquoise sphere was laid in the warm lining of moss and horse-hair, till, when I chirped, four red hungry throats, eager for worm or slug, opened out of a confused mass of feathery down. What a hungry brood it was, to be sure, and how often father and mother were put to it to provide them sustenance! I went but the other day to have a peep, and, behold! brood and parent-birds were gone, the nest was empty, Adam's visitors had departed. In the corners of my bedroom window I have a couple of swallows' nests, and nothing can be pleasanter in these summer mornings than to lie in a kind of half-dream, conscious all the time of the chatterings and endearments of the man-loving creatures. They are beautifully restless, and are continually darting around their nests in the window-corners. All at once there is a great twittering and noise; something of moment has been witnessed, something of importance has occurred in the swallow-world—perhaps a

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fly of unusual size or savour has been bolted. Clinging with their feet, and with heads turned charmingly aside, they chatter away with voluble sweetness, then with a gleam of silver they are gone, and in a trice one is poisoning itself in the wind above my tree-tops, while the other dips her wing as she darts after a fly through the arches of the bridge which lets the slow stream down to the sea. I go to the southern wall, against which I have trained my fruit-trees, and find it a sheet of white and vermeil blossom; and as I know it by heart, I can notice what changes take place on it day by day, what later clumps of buds have burst into colour and odour. What beauty in that blooming wall! The wedding-presents of a princess ranged for admiration would not please me half so much; what delicate colouring! What fragrance the thievish winds steal from it, without making it one odour the poorer! With what a complacent hum the bee goes past! My chaffinch's nest, my swallows, twittering but a few months ago around the kraal of

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the Hottentot, or chasing flies around the six solitary pillars of Baalbec—with their nests in the corners of my bedroom windows, my long-armed fruit-trees flowering against my sunny wall, are not mighty pleasures, but then they are my own, and I have not to go in search of them. And so, like a wise man, I am content with what I have, and make it richer by my fancy, which is as cheap as sunlight, and gilds objects quite as prettily. It is the coins in my own pocket, not the coins in the pockets of my neighbour, that are of use to me. Discontent has never a doit in her purse, and envy is the most poverty-stricken of the passions.

His own children, and the children he happens to meet on the country road, a man regards with quite different eyes. The strange, sunburnt brats returning from a primrose-hunt and laden with floral spoils, may be as healthy looking, as pretty, as well-behaved, as sweet-tempered, as neatly dressed as those that bear his name—may be in every respect as worthy of love and admiration;

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but then they have the misfortune not to belong to him. That little fact makes a great difference. He knows nothing about them; his acquaintance with them is born and dead in a moment. I like my garden better than any other garden, for the same reason. It is my own. And ownership in such a matter implies a great deal. When I first settled here, the ground around the house was sour moorland. I made the walk, planted the trees, built the moss-house, erected the sundial, brought home the rhododendrons and fed them with the mould which they love so well. I am the creator of every blossom, of every odour that comes and goes in the wind. The rustle of my trees is to my ear what his child's voice is to my friends the village doctor or the village clergyman. I know the genealogy of every tree and plant in my garden. I watch their growth as a father watches the growth of his children. It is curious enough, as showing from what sources objects derive their importance, that if you have once planted a tree for other than

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commercial purposes—and in that case it is usually done by your orders and by the hands of hirelings—you have always in it a peculiar interest. You care more for it than you care for all the forests of Norway or America. *You* have planted it, and that is sufficient to make it peculiar amongst the trees of the world. This personal interest I take in every inmate of my garden, and this interest I have increased by sedulous watching. But, really, trees and plants resemble human beings in many ways. You shake a packet of seed into your forcing-frame; and while some grow, others pine and die, or struggle on under hereditary defect, showing indifferent blossoms late in the season, and succumb at length. So far as one could discover, the seeds were originally alike—they received the same care, they were fed by the same moisture and sunlight; but of no two of them are the issues the same. Do I not see something of this kind in the world of men, and can I not please myself with quaint analogies? These plants and trees have their

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seasons of illness and their sudden deaths. Your best rose-tree, whose fame has spread for twenty miles, is smitten by some fell disease; its leaves take an unhealthy hue, and in a day or so it is sapless—dead. A tree of mine, the first last spring to put out its leaves, and which wore them till November, made this spring no green response to the call of the sunshine. Marvelling what ailed it, I went to examine, and found it had been dead for months; and yet during the winter there had been no frost to speak of, and more than its brothers and sisters it was in no way exposed. These are the tragedies of the garden, and they shadow forth other tragedies nearer us. In everything we find a kind of dim mirror of ourselves. Sterne, if placed in a desert, said he would love a tree; and I can fancy such a love would not be altogether unsatisfying. Love of trees and plants is safe. You do not run risk in your affections. They are my children, silent and beautiful, untouched by any passion, unpolluted by evil tempers; for me they leaf and flower

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themselves. In autumn they put off their rich apparel, but next year they are back again, with dresses fair as ever; and—one can extract a kind of fanciful bitterness from the thought—should I be laid in my grave in winter, they would all in spring be back again, with faces as bright and with breaths as sweet, missing me not at all. Ungrateful, the one I am fondest of would blossom very prettily if planted on the soil that covers me—where my dog would die, where my best friend would perhaps raise an inscription!

I like flowering plants, but I like trees more—for the reason, I suppose, that they are slower in coming to maturity, are longer lived, that you can become better acquainted with them, and that in the course of years memories and associations hang as thickly on their boughs as do leaves in summer or fruits in autumn. I do not wonder that great earls value their trees, and never, save in direst extremity, lift upon them the axe. Ancient descent and glory are made audible

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in the proud murmur of immemorial woods. There are forests in England whose leafy noises may be shaped into Agincourt and the names of the battlefields of the Roses; oaks that dropped their acorns in the year that Henry VIII. held his Field of the Cloth of Gold, and beeches that gave shelter to the deer when Shakespeare was a boy. There they stand, in sun and shower, the broad-armed witnesses of perished centuries; and sore must his need be who commands a woodland massacre. A great English tree, the rings of a century in its bole, is one of the noblest of natural objects; and it touches the imagination no less than the eye, for it grows out of tradition and a past order of things, and is pathetic with the suggestions of dead generations. Trees waving a colony of rooks in the wind to-day are older than historic lines. Trees are your best antiques. There are cedars on Lebanon which the axes of Solomon spared, they say, when he was busy with his Temple; there are olives on Olivet that might have rustled in the ears

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of the Master and the Twelve; there are oaks in Sherwood which have tingled to the horn of Robin Hood, and have listened to Maid Marian's laugh. Think of an existing Syrian cedar which is nearly as old as history, which was middle-aged before the wolf suckled Romulus! Think of an existing English elm in whose branches the heron was reared which the hawks of Saxon Harold killed! If you are a notable, and wish to be remembered, better plant a tree than build a city or strike a medal; it will outlast both.

My trees are young enough, and if they do not take me away into the past, they project me into the future. When I planted them, I knew I was performing an act, the issues of which would outlast me long. My oaks are but saplings; but what undreamed-of English kings will they not outlive! I pluck my apples, my pears, my plums; and I know that from the same branches other hands will pluck apples, pears, and plums when this body of mine will have shrunk into a pinch of dust. I cannot dream with what

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year these hands will date their letters. A man does not plant a tree for himself, he plants it for posterity. And, sitting idly in the sunshine, I think at times of the unborn people who will, to some small extent, be indebted to me. Remember me kindly, ye future men and women! When I am dead, the juice of my apples will foam and spirt in your cider-presses, my plums will gather for you their misty bloom; and that any of your youngsters should be choked by one of my cherry-stones, merciful Heaven forbend!

BY THE TOWER OF ARDGITH

BY E. V. B.

BY THE TOWER OF ARDGITH

UNDER the yew hedge that skirts a broad turf walk there lay something white. Jock—the prize Scotch terrier—spied it first and pulled it out. There it lay at my feet in the sparkle of sunshine and dew—the dried-up, shrunken body of a poor little “Narraway wifie,” so called by the North-country folk. It might have been taken for an ouzel but for the delicately webbed feet. In the fierce gales of last winter hundreds of these little auks were driven across the sea from Norway to the Scottish shores and far inland. They were picked up dead in gardens and fields and on the hillsides. Sometimes they were found alive, but only to survive a day or two. I was told of one that they lifted out of the snow, and fed and cared for for just one day. On the second day the “wifie” died; and her mate, who must have arrived in the night, was found dead beside her cage. In these Norland garden grounds, little details of wild nature occur which to a naturalist are full of interest. Odds and ends occasionally come to light; traces of the small his-

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tories and romances that silently run their course, hidden away among the trees and the leaves and roots and stones. It bears no special relation to autumn gardens, and it is an old story now (for it happened fully a week ago!). But it happened here, and I still recall sadly sometimes the episode of the last end of the kestrel who has lived here in peace, haunting the old tower, for the past two years. On summer Sunday afternoons she would perch on the highest branch of a tall fir-tree below the terrace, surveying thence all that went on. One evening something was amiss. The bird flew low, settling near us on the grass, then heavily mounting to her roost on the tower, whence she would watch us for a time, and then fly down again. It was surmised that she had killed and eaten a lost caged dove, and she was sentenced to be shot to-morrow. But "to-morrow" we found the kestrel half-dying in the strawberry beds, and soon she ceased to breathe, and we laid her on the grass for dead. There she remained, dead,

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till evening. Then I took up the poor bird, stretched her long wings, and smoothed her ruffled plumage. Suddenly the great beautiful eyes opened wide—gazing full upon me! The soul of the kestrel yet lived, though its body was dead. In a quiet nook hard by release soon came. *Utter starvation* was ascertained to be the cause of death. Could we but have known!* In these early September days autumn approaches step by step, and we feel that now she is near at hand. Bluebells have almost all faded from grassy banks and roadsides. The limes are yellowing too soon, for their blossoming was late, and they have yet scarce lost their fragrance. The sycamores overhanging the garden wall are embrowned already, reminding one of the chestnut groves of a Titian background. By and by the sycamore leaves will shrivel off, spotted and unreddened, and lie on the ground in unsightly heaps. Small reminis-

*The summer had been very dry, and the supply of insects and mice, on which alone the kestrel feeds, had failed.

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cences of their golden showers of May return to the still green laburnums in scattered points of yellow; but the gardens of Scotland have only now attained their zenith; and it is of Scotch gardens only, and the glory of them, that I can write, since for years past I have not known an English autumnal season. Far down below the window where I sit lies a garden which, in its way, is perhaps unique. An old tower and weed-grown ivied ruins command a wide green terrace, nearly the eighth of a mile in length, built on the rock. The terrace is brilliant at this time with clumps and long borders within box-edgings, of varied tints of scarlet and orange and blue. At the eastern end stands the modern castle, and away in the distant west rises the lovely peak of Ben-nachie—ever fair and never the same—whether robed in lilac mists, or deep violet-purple against the amber sunset; or in winter wearing his white night-cap. Just in front of the tower there was once a garden pavilion of the old French style in vogue two

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hundred years ago. A flight of stone stairs led down through the pavilion into the yew-garden. The upper pavilion room, or parlour, has long since disappeared, and the stairs are now outside, overhung with ivy and wild wreaths of trumpet honeysuckle. The yew-garden is enclosed within grey granite walls of immense size and thickness. In the midst, upon about one acre or so of lawn, stand the grand old yews, as for centuries they have stood. Fourteen in number, there they still remain, despite time and climate, which have dealt sorely with them, and have broken here and there their ordered ranks. These yew-trees are of great size and their branches of enormous spread. Though a few are scarred and bare, yet they carry well their dark green burthen of, maybe, six hundred years, so far as can be guessed. There once were two narrow avenues of limes flanking the yews on either hand. But these were felled a score of years ago, and only the memory of them is left. Well did we know the use of these green aisles for soli-

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tude and meditation, when we were fain to say:

“ ‘ Friends and companions get you gone,
’Tis my desire to be alone. . . .

· · · ·
No gem, no treasure, like to this.
With pleasing thoughts the time beguile
Unheard, unsought for, or unseen,
A thousand pleasures do me bless
And crown my soul with happiness.”

Or for long quiet talks with one or two—
pacing up and down in the cool sweet shade,
long ago, in the days that are no more. The
lost lime-alleys have their regrets, as also
has the tall gean-tree or wild cherry. It was
but a poor-looking tree all summer; but in
autumn how it flamed out into crimson and
gold! In an open space in the centre of the
garden is the fine old sun-dial of James the
Second's time, which, with its three lichen-
mottled steps, its dials, and its sculptured
column, is supposed to have been brought
hither from sunny France. The eight-sided
top, or head, is so managed, with twenty-
four little gnomons in twenty-four circular
recesses—as to show the hour in every

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quarter of the globe! The fountain, too—picturesque with reeds and water-lilies—scatters its glitter of diamond drops in the gloom of the yew-trees' shade. Here also stood, under the broad shadow of a yew, a green seat. I know that it had been there a hundred years or more, for in the Castle drawing-room hangs a crayon portrait, of the date 1783, of a lady dressed in soft white India muslin, with powdered hair. She leans her hand, holding a blue glove, on the back of that same green garden-seat. I believe it had never received even a new coat of paint since those days! Yet in 1888 it still remained staunch and whole.

“ . . . Oh, world's inconstancie!
That which is firm doth flit and fall away,
And that is flitting doth abide and stay!”

Under the yews, how easily can one dream away a summer's afternoon! Scarce any sound from the outer world comes near. There is the plash of the little fountain, but no song of summer birds or bees. The black-birds and thrushes are employed in sucking

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dry the last berries on the gooseberry-bushes, careless of entangling nets. Yellow-hammers flit from tree to tree, or a robin lights down silently, with curious eye-glance, from a branch; or a late brood of grey wagtails chase the flies with merry little runs upon the fountain's edge. We never see here the pied-wagtail, which, like a twinkle of black and silver, is so familiar an enrichment of our English lawns. A sea-gull, one of three flying seawards overhead, drops a grey feather, which floats down and rests among the shadows; or the soft furry wing-feather of a tawny owl lying on the moss tells tales of wild night-life in this old shadowy spot. Perchance a white-gleaming mushroom, just on the margin of the lawn, tempts one irresistibly to pluck it, not without misgivings concerning the possibly deadly nature of yew-grown mushrooms. One morning, in October, will suddenly spring up where the shade is deepest some magnificent toad-stool, dyed scarlet, and pearly all over. In the clear lingering light of long June evenings, in other

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days when the dinner-hour was so much earlier and evenings longer, we used to sit among the yews till Curfew tolled at nine o'clock from the old kirk belfry. The Curfew bell is still rung in the village below the Castle hill, notwithstanding railway and telegraph and manufactory chimneys; but now it tolls at eight, and it is for the shops to shut. Old customs die hard; and yet how many other things are too soon forgotten! After the lapse of scarce forty years the very site of some well-known house, for instance, will come to be disputed. It is thus with the old feu-house in the village, where Bishop Skinner's father composed the celebrated *Reel of Tullochgorum*, and which was pulled down less than forty years ago, and which has just been assigned a totally new site. From charters and old records the strongest reasons exist for believing that, although the yews are much older, the garden and the place were made by Thomas Chrystall, Abbot of Kinloss, and that he built here a great hall and a "tour fortalice." These

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Churchmen knew well—none better—how to choose their abode! Ythan, famed for trout and salmon, flows not many roods from the garden. The position of the garden is so protected that in former days peaches ripened on the walls. Since direct proof is wanting that the Abbot Chrystall made the place, learned dissertations have been printed, and hot discussions held, to prove that he did not. And the stones of the ruin—who know—are dumb, and the ancient trees keep silence. . . . There is shelter in the thick belts of plantation without the walls; their leaves are mellowing now, prophetic of the autumn; but beyond stretches far and near a wide treeless waste of rich corn and pasture-lands. Old grey dykes scarce break the violence of winter storms that ravage and lay low the woods, and of winds that flush the cottage children's cheeks with red. The saying of the countryside, "No need to thin the trees now the Great Forester has come," has all the truth and poetry of folk-lore. With summer, and in these first September days, soft

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winds, breathing balm of untold sweetness, blow upon us straight from the German Ocean. The coast is so nigh that, after a storm, from the high terrace walk we hear the sound of the troubled sea—a surly monotone, like the low roar of savage beasts in a desolate land. Dreary as is, to English taste, this bare north-east coast, we who love it presume to hold it dearer than the wild scenery of Highland hills, or even the richer loveliness of Deeside. And when the plough has turned the yellow fields to brown, the even, never-ending furrows lying across the steep undulating land seem to wear, for some minds, the suggestiveness of a sketch in pen-and-ink compared with a finished picture. We have been musing long enough under the gloaming yews; let us come out into the September sunshine and commune with the flowers. The borders are full of colour. In one there is blue monkshood (*Aconitum autumnale*) full six feet high, like pillars of blue fire, alternate with golden-rod (*Solidago*), sun-flushed Boconia, and feath-

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ery spikes of *Aclæa serpentaria*. Hosts of humble-bees throng the monkshood, all round and up to the top, hurrying as though their very lives depended on the honey-getting of the hour. They are every one of them the same: black, with dull yellow bands and grey tails. The sheaves of golden-rod, alternate with the monkshood, are entirely left to hordes of flies, not a bee amongst them. As yet Tritoma, which later on will make so grand a show, have no sign of flower amid their dense growth of long narrow leaves. There are ranks of snap-dragon, gay with all imaginable tints, and hedges of corn-flower, blue, pink, and white and purple, *Hyacinthus candicans* and gladioli in varied groups, and single dahlias in luxuriantly flowered rows. Alas! that I have to chronicle the fact! long lines also of yellow calceolaria and china aster! Calceolaria does so thoroughly well in Scotland that too much use, perhaps, is made of it. It is certainly the most uninteresting of "bedding out" flowers. I fear dislike would be a word hard-

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ly strong enough for my personal feeling about calceolarias. The colour is too raw (unless when they are brown, and that is dismal). Every flower of them comes precisely the same. They never seem to me to be as God's own children; like other flowers. And yet a single plant of calceolaria growing here and there, alone amid other things, might be tolerated. Blue lobelia—though “a bedder”—is delightful, and so are scarlet and variegated geranium. The endless lovely flowers that are grown from seed in patches or broad bands are surely preferable to the comparatively few plants made to serve the dull routine of “bedding out.” Gazenia, with black velvet, gem-studded circlet rayed round with orange, and dwarf larkspur, and clarkia, and candytuft (though that may run in too common a strain). *Phacelia campanulata*, pale primrose-tinted *Platystemon californicus*, *Limnasia Douglasii*, &c.; with a thousand more. Clarkia, both pink and white, is an old delightful favourite. Here is a large patch of it in pure white between

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the apple-trees along one of the grass walks. The effect of the whole is light and fresh and varied. One has to look well into the whole mass to understand how each flower is in form a true Maltese Cross, floriated. Now and again the cross comes out plain, and unfloriated; as if Nature in her haste had neglected to finish off each one the same. It is to be understood that the garden where we wander is of very large extent, and although the most exquisite order prevails throughout the greater portion of it, some breadths of border have to be left much as they were nearly half a century ago—the older plants of that date being allowed to spread and flourish as they will, while but few new ones have been added in later days. Herbaceous plants increasing into large clumps are far handsomer than if they had been divided. The double *Geranium pratense*, grown thus, made a fine mass earlier in the year. *Lysimachia verticillata* is in its prime, but evidently impatient of the dryness of the soil. And for the same cause it

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may be that iris is never seen here, "with her glorious rainbow clothed." There is a rosy mist of phlox; while with Japanese anemones, both white and pink, the bloom is finer than is usually seen farther south, and the colouring more vivid. Autumn crocus, white and lilac, single and double, are present everywhere in little knots. How they first come one never seems to know; we did not see them coming; but one day, on a sudden, we chance to look down, and they are there in all their beauty. From the farther end of a green vista some sudden fire of scarlet arrests the eye. It is a plant of scarlet *Tropæolum* (*Tropæolum speciosum*) hiding in clouds of glory the blackness of an Irish yew. In Scotch gardens this thing is absolutely a garden weed. In the south we may break our hearts over coaxing it to grow, yet grow and thrive it will not. If it would but consent to stay with us in an English home—for the sake of its perfect colour it should climb and clamber wheresoever the spirit moved it to

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disport itself. It should mingle with my wild briony, and illuminate each tree:

“And catch the neighbouring shrub
With clasping tendrils and infest his branch,
Else unadorned, with many a gay festoon,
And fragrant chaplet, recompensing well
The strength they borrow with the grace they lend.”*

After the flame of the flower has retired, all over the plant appear little round lapis-lazuli beads, two or three sitting together, in tiny open calyx-cups. These remain more or less for our delight until the day when frost first strikes down the parent plant. I fear, however, that *Tropæolum speciosum* may do more harm when it smothers a shrub in its close embrace than ever did our white briony. Almost everything that does well in England grows even better in Scotland. Where the soil and position of the garden are favourable, they will attain to greater stature with more than equal luxuriance, while yet their growth is less rank, and, in some indescribable way, of a more obedient character. Could there but be room found for

*Cowper, “The Sweet-Pea.”

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all one wishes in the garden, how many things that grow so well in Aberdeenshire should have a trial! There is *Actæa rubra* amongst others—now entirely crimsoned over with clustered berries, and only a foot and a half in height; or St John's wort in three varieties, one of them bearing bunches of large yellow flowers; wanting, however, the characteristic stamens which give such charm to the low-growing species, here just out in bloom. Then there is the yellow-flowering tree-potentilla; and, to name no others, a honeysuckle, which appears to be quite new, and I know of it in one garden only; the pyramidal flower-spike deliciously fragrant, and the leaves glaucous. These all bloom here late in the year, although their period would doubtless be earlier in the south. Pansies always do better in Scotland, for they greatly enjoy the coolness of the soil. In amongst some rhododendrons one of the common violas has carried out an extraordinary freak. It appears to have imagined the plan of making one believe a

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small rhododendron-bush to have broken out all over into little lilac heart's-ease! I stopped to examine the cause of this strange effect, and found that a seedling viola at its root had climbed up through and through the stems and leaves, bestowing thus a second bloom, as it were, of a very opposite kind. There is no second bloom on any roses except the *Devoniensis* and *Gloire de Dijon*, though Madame Plantier, always bounteous, gave us the last of her *boules de neige* only a few days back.

About the western end of the high terrace clings ever the grace of a tender memory. At that end is the ivy-covered ruin (a tall round tower), and part of the shell of the old house. Through the empty windows fair faces in past days have looked out on the yew-garden and the autumn fields beyond. In the tower walls loopholes and narrow window-slits could tell a sterner tale. Round the corners in August waved, like a white banner, long flowering shoots of *syringa*. On the smooth turf beneath the windows

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stands an ancient sun-dial. It is rudely hewn, rather than carved, in coarse granite, and represents four children's heads turned in opposite directions, the three gnomons standing out from the base. In the lapse of years lichen has gilded over the hair and shoulders. High up on the ruined house-wall, half hidden in the ivy, is seen a small finely carved stone bearing a shield with a coat of arms and scroll. It was placed here by John Kennedy, a former possessor of the place; on the scroll appears his name and the name of "Isobel Cheyne his Ladye." Of his family motto, "*Avise la fin*," the first word only can be clearly made out. The whole is crumbling away fast by stress of years and weather. They were pious folk these Kennedys, and they gave a silver chalice to the kirk, inscribed "A coup for the Lord's teabell" (table). Nevertheless, Kennedy and his men had afterwards a deadly fight with their neighbour Forbes, and he had to fly the country. All this happened long after Abbot Chrystall's day, after the

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Church lands had been confiscated. The touch of interest above referred to, however, belongs to later times, now remembered only by one or two. It was fifty years ago, in the golden mists and splendour of mid-autumn, that a new lady of the castle came, and for the first time saw the garden terrace of the long-wished, long-awaited-for inheritance. She at once set her fancy on that quiet spot near the old tower, and planned a little garden there. Here were planted the flowers she loved the best, and here were brought plants from her own former home in England—lilies of the valley, yellow brier-rose and honeysuckle, and the old-fashioned tea-plant climber; crimson moss-roses, and delicate white geranium dashed with lilac. The little border of gentian and tiny white campanula remains, and the flowers still push up through the weeds, and open in their season. The vases on the wall are there, and the stone seat is in its place. But she never rested there, and she never saw the bloom on her favourite flowers—for early in the sum-

BY THE TOWER OF ARDGITH

mer the eyes of the gentle châtelaine were already closed in sleep. Over the garden door, underneath her name, might be the words "*Lux erepta de cælo luceat.*" . . . The west border along the terrace, like some others, has not been disturbed for many a year. Here acanthus makes an immense growth. It does not spread, but has grown into a bush. Stray blossoms, of right belonging to June—bright red and yellow stars—are shining here and there upon Schyzostilis and yellow king's-spear. *Lilium tigrinum* seems unwilling to let summer go. Double yellow Potentilla (*P. Phæbus*) will outlast *Eryngium amethystinum*—the only plant, I believe, that exists with stalks painted ultramarine. *Lythrum superbum roseum* is flowering off his latest, long, glowing plumes. It is but a river-side wild flower (Loosestrife); yet since cultivation has improved the colour and the growth of it, it deserves a first place in the autumn garden. Flowers of the easiest culture have a way of disappearing from a garden sometimes, with-

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out any apparent cause. Seven years ago *Agrostemma flos Jovis* gave infinite delight, with its contrast of white leaves and deep crimson bloom. To-day there is not one in all the borders. Another loss is the little *Dianthus*, *Napoleon III.*, a creature of marvellous colour, and of floescence so profuse, that care must be taken to get cuttings in good time lest it flower itself to death. Plantain lilies (*Funkia*) have withered away, though their great club-shaped foliage will stay with us another month or so. *Scolymus grandiflorus*, the great yellow thistle by the steps leading to the garden, has turned brown and looks forlorn. Tansy is beginning to be gay with flattened umbels like golden salvers. In old gardening books, "Gold of Pleasure" is sometimes named. Could it be this late-blooming tansy? There is also *Tanacetum balsamita* (Cost 'Mary), a precious second bloom of *Helvetia pubescens rosea*, and the pervading gaiety of *Coreopsis lanceolata*. A few weeks longer, and flower and leaf will, one by one, have ceased from the

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garden borders, and the grace of the fashion of them must perish and be forgot. Yet has not each one, as it faded and died away, seemed in its way to whisper "I shall arise"? And so, after the winter and hard weather, if we wait and have long patience, we shall see the flowers come again with joy.

LANDSCAPE GARDENING
BY SIR WALTER SCOTT

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THE garden, at first intended merely for producing esculent vegetables, fruits, and flowers, began to assume another character, so soon as the increase of civilisation tempted the feudal baron to step a little way out of the limits of his fortifications, and permitted his high dame to come down from her seat upon the castle walls, so regularly assigned to her by ancient minstrels, and tread with stately pace the neighbouring precincts which art had garnished for her reception. These gardens were defended with walls, as well for safety as for shelter; they were often surrounded with fosses, had the command of water, and gave the disposer of the ground an opportunity to display his taste by introducing canals, basins, and fountains, the margins of which admitted of the highest architectural ornament. As art enlarged its range, and the nobles were satisfied with a display of magnificence to atone for the abridgment of their power, new ornaments were successively introduced; banqueting-houses were built; terraces were extended,

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and connected with staircases and balustrades of the richest forms. The result was indeed in the highest degree artificial, but it was a sight beautiful in itself—a triumph of human art over the elements; and, connected as these ornamental gardens were with splendid mansions, in the same character, there was a symmetry and harmony betwixt the baronial palace itself and these its natural appendages which recommended them to the judgment as well as to the eye. The shrubs themselves were artificial, in so far as they were either exotic, or, if indigenous, were treated in a manner, and presented an appearance, which was altogether the work of cultivation. The examination of such objects furnished amusement to the merely curious, information to the scientific, and pleasure at least to those who only looked at them, and passed on. Where there was little extent of ground especially, what could be fitter for the amusement of learned leisure than those “trim gardens” which Milton has represented as the chosen scene

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of the easy and unoccupied man of letters. He had then around him the most delightful subjects of observation, in the fruits and flowers, the shrubs and trees, many of them interesting from their novelty and peculiar appearance, and habits inviting him to such studies as lead from created things up to the Almighty Creator.

A garden of this sort was an extension of the splendour of the residence into a certain limited portion of the domain—was, in fact, often used as a sort of chapel of ease to the apartments within doors, and afforded opportunities for the society, after the early dinner of our ancestors, to enjoy the evening in the cool fragrance of walks and bowers. Hence the dispersed groups which Watteau and others set forth as perambulating the highly ornamental scene which these artists took pleasure in painting. Sometimes the hospitality of Old England made a different use of these retreats, and tenanted the pleasure ground with parties of jolly guests, who retired from the dining-parlour to finish the

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bottle *al fresco* on the bowling-green and in its vicinity. We have heard, for example, that, in a former generation, this used to be the rule at Trentham, where a large party of county gentlemen used to assemble once a week, on a public day appointed for the purpose. At a certain hour the company adjourned to the bowling-green, where, according to their different inclinations, they played at bowls, caroused, lounged, or smoked, as their inclinations determined, and thus released their noble landlord from all further efforts to keep up the spirit of the entertainment. The honest Staffordshire squires were not, perhaps, the most picturesque objects in the world, while thus engaged, with countenances highly illuminated, "With a pipe and a flask, puffing sorrow away"; but the circumstance serves to show that such *plaisances* as we have described formed convenient as well as agreeable accompaniments to the mansion of a nobleman, who, having a certain duty to perform towards his neighbourhood, was accommodated by

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that arrangement of his pleasure-ground which enabled him to do the thing with most satisfaction to his guests and least personal inconvenience to himself.

Nothing is more completely the child of art than a garden. Its *artificial* productions are necessarily surrounded by walls, marking out the space which they occupy as something totally distinct from the rest of the domain, and they are not seldom distinguished by the species of buildings which their culture requires. The green-houses and conservatories necessary to complete a garden on a large scale are subjects susceptible of much ornament, all of which, like the plants themselves, must be the production of art, and art in its most obvious phasis. It seems right and congruous that these objects, being themselves the offspring of art, should have all the grace of outward form and interior splendour which their parent art can give them. Their formality is to be varied and disguised, their shapes to be ornamented. A brick wall is, in itself, a disagree-

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able object; but its colour, when covered with green boughs, and partially seen through them, produces such a rich effect as to gratify the painter in a very high degree. Upon the various shapes and forms of shrubs, creepers, and flowers it is unnecessary to dilate; they are the most beautiful of nature's works, and to collect them and arrange them with taste is the proper and rational purpose of art. Water, even when disposed into the formal shapes of ponds, canals, and artificial fountains, although this may be considered as the greatest violence which can be perpetrated upon nature, affords effects beautiful in themselves, and congenial with the presence of ornamental architecture and artificial gardening.

Wealth has proved a snare, and played "many fantastic tricks before high heaven." If we approve of Palladian architecture, the vases and balustrades of Vitruvius, the enriched entablatures and superb stairs of the Italian school of gardening, we must not, on this account, be construed as vindicating

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the paltry imitations of the Dutch, who clipped yews into monsters of every species and description, and relieved them with the painted wooden figures which are seen much in the attitude of their owners, silent and snugly smoking at the end of the paltry walk of every *Lust-huys*. This *topiarian* art, as it was called, came into England with King William, and has left strong and ungraceful traces behind it. The distinction between the Italian and Dutch is obvious. A stone hewn into a gracefully ornamented vase or urn has a value which it did not before possess; a yew hedge clipped into a fortification is only defaced. The one is a product of art, the other a distortion of nature. Yet now that these ridiculous anomalies have fallen into general disuse, it must be acknowledged that there exist gardens, the work of Loudon, Wise, and such persons as laid out gardens in the Dutch taste, which would be much better subjects for modification than for absolute destruction. Their rarity *now* entitles them to some care as a species of

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antiques, and unquestionably they give character to some snug, quiet, and sequestered situations, which would otherwise have no marked features of any kind. We ourselves retain an early and pleasing recollection of the seclusion of such a scene. A small cottage, adjacent to a beautiful village, the habitation of an ancient maiden lady, was for some time our abode. It was situated in a garden of some seven or eight acres, planted about the beginning of the eighteenth century by one of the Millars related to the author of the *Gardeners' Dictionary*, or, for aught we know, by himself. It was full of long straight walks betwixt hedges of yew and hornbeam, which rose tall and close on every side. There were thickets of flowering shrubs, a bower, and an arbour, to which access was obtained through a little maze of contorted walks, calling itself a labyrinth. In the centre of the bower was a splendid *platanus*, or Oriental plane—a huge hill of leaves—one of the noblest specimens of that regularly beautiful tree which we remember

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to have seen. In different parts of the garden were fine ornamental trees which had attained great size, and the orchard was filled with fruit-trees of the best description. There were seats and trellis-walks, and a banqueting-house. Even in our time this little scene, intended to present a formal exhibition of vegetable beauty, was fast going to decay. The parterres of flowers were no longer watched by the quiet and simple *friends*, under whose auspices they had been planted, and much of the ornament of the domain had been neglected or destroyed to increase its productive value. We visited it lately, after an absence of many years. Its air of retreat, the seclusion which its alleys afforded, was entirely gone; the huge *platanus* had died, like most of its kind, in the beginning of this century; the hedges were cut down, the trees stubbed up, and the whole character of the place so much destroyed, that we were glad when we could leave it. This was the progress of innovation, perhaps of improvement: yet, for the sake of that

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one garden, as a place of impressive and solemn retreat, we are inclined to enter a protest against the hasty and ill-considered destruction of things which, once destroyed, cannot be restored.

We may here also notice a small place, called Barncluth, in Lanarkshire, standing on the verge of the ridgy bank which views the junction of the Evan with the Clyde. Nothing can be more romantic than the scene around: the river sweeps over a dark, rugged bed of stone, overhung with trees and bushes; the ruins of the original castle of the noble family of Hamilton frown over the precipice; the oaks which crown the banks beyond those grey towers are relics of the ancient Caledonian forest, and at least a thousand years old. It might be thought that the house and garden of Barncluth, with its walks and velvet turf and its verdant alleys of yew and holly, would seem incongruous among natural scenes as magnificent as those we have described. But the effect generally produced is exactly the contrary.

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The place is so small, that its decorations, while they form, from their antique appearance, a singular foreground, cannot compete with, far less subdue, the solemn grandeur of the view which you look down upon; and thus gives the spectator the idea of a hermitage constructed in the midst of the wilderness.

The passionate fondness of our ancestors for the chase is often manifested in their choice of a residence. In an ancient inscription on the house of Wharncliffe, we are informed that the house was built in Henry VIII.'s time by one gentle knight Sir Thomas Wortley, that he might hear the buck *bell* in the summer season—a simple record, which speaks much to the imagination. The space of ground set apart for a park of deer must, to answer its purpose, possess the picturesque qualities which afford the greatest scope for the artist: there ought to be a variety of broken ground, of copse wood and of growing timber, of land and of water. The soil and herbage must be left

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in natural state; the long fern, amongst which the fawns delight to repose, must not be destroyed. In short, the stag, by nature one of the freest denizens of the forest, can only be kept under even comparative restraint by taking care that all around him intimates a complete state of forest and wilderness. But the character of abode which is required by these noble animals of the chase is precisely the same which, from its beautiful effects of light and shadow, from its lonely and sequestered character, from the variety and intricacy of its glades, from the numerous and delightful details which it affords on every point, makes the strongest and most pleasing impression on all who are alive to natural beauty. The ancient English poets, Chaucer and Spenser in particular, never luxuriate more than when they get into a forest: by the accuracy with which they describe particular trees, and by their noticing the different characters of the different species, and the various effects of light and darkness upon the walks

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and glades of the forest, it is evident that they regarded woodland scenery not merely as associated with their favourite sports, but as having in itself beauties which they could appreciate, though their age was not possessed of the fascinating art of committing them to canvas. Even the common people, as we noticed in a former article, seldom mentioned "the good forest," and "the merry greenwood," without some expression of fondness, arising, doubtless, from the pleasure they took in the scenes themselves, as well as in the pastimes which they afforded.

We are not, however, to suppose that the old feudal barons made ornamental scenery any part of their study. When planting their parks, or when cutting paths and glades through them, their attention was probably entirely occupied with the protection of the deer and convenience of the huntsman. Long avenues were particularly necessary for these large parties resembling our modern *battues*, when the honoured guests, being stationed in fit *standings*, had an opportunity

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of displaying their skill in venery, by selecting the buck which was in season, and their dexterity at bringing him down with the cross-bow or long-bow; and hence all the great forests were pierced by these long rectilinear alleys which appear in old prints, and are mentioned in old books. The following description of Chantilly, by Lord Herbert of Cherbury, though the scene is in France, and on a scale of unusual grandeur and extent, is no bad picture of the domains by which the feudal nobility surrounded the castles and manor-houses and of the character of the mansions themselves:

“A little river, descending from some higher grounds, in a country which was almost all his (the Constable of Montmorency’s) own, and falling at last upon a rock in the middle of a valley, which, to keep drawing forwards, it must on one or other side thereof have declined—some of the ancestors of the Montmorencys, to ease the river of this labour, made clear channels through this rock, to give it a free passage, dividing the rock by

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this means into little islands, upon which he built a great strong castle, joined together with bridges, and sumptuously furnished with hangings of silk and gold, rare pictures, and statues; all which buildings, erected as I formerly told, were compassed about with water. . . . One might see the huge carps, pikes, and trouts, which were kept in several divisions, gliding among the waters very easily. Yet nothing in my opinion added so much to the glory of this castle as a forest adjoining to it, and upon a level with the house; for, being of a very large extent, and set thick with tall trees and underwood, the whole forest, which was replenished with wild-boar, stag, and roe-deer, was cut into long walks every way, so that although the dogs might follow their chase through the thickets, the huntsman might ride along the sand walks, and meet or overtake their game in some one of them, they being cut with that art that they led to all the parts in the said forest."

Charles V., when passing through France,

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was so delighted with Chantilly as to declare he would have given a province in the Low Countries to have possessed such a residence; and the reader must be exclusively prejudiced indeed to the modern system who cannot imagine to himself the impression made by the gorgeous splendour of the château, contrasted with the wilderness of the surrounding forest.

If the reader will imagine a house in the irregular form of architecture which was introduced in Elizabeth's time, its varied front graced with projecting oriels, and its angles ornamented with turrets; its columnar chimneys, so much adorned as to make that a beauty which is generally a deformity; its fair halls, banqueting-rooms, galleries, and lodgings for interior accommodation—it will afford no uncomfortable notion of the days of good Queen Bess. In immediate and close connection with the mansion lie its gardens, with their terraces, urns, statues, staircases, screens, alcoves, and summer-houses; its dry-paved or turfed walks, leading through

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a succession of interesting objects, the whole line of architecture corresponding with that of the house, with its Gothic labels and entablature, but assuming gradually a plainer and more massive character, as the grounds extended and seem to connect themselves with the open country. The inhabitants possessed the means, we must also suppose, of escaping from this display of ostentatious splendour to the sequestered paths of a lonely chase, dark enough and extensive enough to convey the idea of a natural forest, where, as in strong contrast with the scene we have quitted, the cooing of the wood-pigeon is above heard, where the streams find their way unconfined, and the trees spread their arms untortured by art; where all is solemn, grand, and untutored, and seems the work of unassisted nature. We would ask the reader, when he has arranged in his ideas such a dwelling, with its accompaniments of a natural and ornamental character, not whether the style might be corrected by improving the internal ar-

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rangement of the apartments; by diminishing the superfluous ornaments of the *plaisance*; by giving better, yet not formal, access to the natural beauties of the park, extending its glades in some places and deepening its thickets in others—for all this we willingly admit; but whether our ancestors did not possess all that good taste could demand as the materials of most delightful habitations?

IN A GARDEN OF DAMASCUS
BY A. W. KINGLAKE

IN A GARDEN OF DAMASCUS

WILD as the nightest woodland of a deserted home in England, but without its sweet sadness, is the sumptuous Garden of Damascus. Forest trees tall and stately enough, if you could see their lofty crests, yet lead a bustling life of it below, with their branches struggling against strong numbers of bushes and wilful shrubs. The shade upon the earth is black as night. High, high above your head, and on every side all down to the ground, the thicket is hemmed in and choked up by the interlacing boughs that droop with the weight of roses, and load the slow air with their damask breath. The rose trees which I saw are all of the kind we call *damask*—they grow to an immense height and size. There are no other flowers. Here and there are patches of ground made clear from the cover, and these are either carelessly planted with some common or useful vegetable, or else are left free to the wayward ways of nature, and bear rank weeds, moist-looking and cool to your eyes, and freshening the sense with their earthly and bitter fragrance.

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There is a lane opened through the thicket, so broad in some places you can pass along side by side, in some so narrow (the shrubs are for ever encroaching) that you ought, if you can, to go on the first and hold back the bough of the rose-tree. And through this wilderness there tumbles a loud rushing stream, which is halted at last in the lowest corner of the garden, and there tossed up in the fountain by the side of the simple alcove. This is all. Never for an instant will the people of Damascus attempt to separate the idea of bliss from these wild gardens and rushing waters.

ELRICK, FIELD OF FAIRIES
BY E. V. B.



IN A GARDEN OF DAMASCUS

ELRICK, FIELD OF FAIRIES

IT was soon after moonrise on the eve of full moon, the 2nd of October, a year ago, when in crossing the bridge over Elrick Burn there appeared to me the strangest, weirdest illumination upon the old stone parapet on either side. Opposing lights were cast from a great gold harvest moon and from the green glow of a frosty west. Neither light did seem to gain the mastery, for both alike threw shadows on the walls. On the right hand burned the moon's light, warm as the reflex of some dying conflagration, while cold and crystal-pure as beryl itself shone the western sky upon the left. Past the bridge the road lay between lines of slender ash-trees casting half-transparent shades. Did ever anyone before, I wondered, walk thus between two shadows, shadowing him right and left? Better so than none, for that is no good sign. Long ago it was said, by the country-folk, of at least one man of evil repute among lairds of his day, that "neither on moonlichty nights nor in broad day had he ever a shadow to him."

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As I stood still for a moment considering the curious effect, I thought a *third* silently, slowly went by. It might have been a mere momentary illusion, though certainly I saw a shadow pass. There was just a little shock of surprise, nothing more; for who can tell what strange things may not happen on such an evening in the North? It is likely that on no other evening, in any other month of the year, would moon and sky combine to make one feel linked with the outland race of them who, as a poet told, dwell "east of the sun and west of the moon," wherever that fair land of dreams may be.

Along these lonesome country roads, when labourers have gone home and lights begin to stream from windows on the hillsides far apart, few might be the belated wayfarers who marked the crossing shadows by the light of the harvest moon. When summer is past and happy daylight walks are done, there comes the joy of the moon, with her mysterious charm. When the Empress of the Night rules in splendour, flooding the

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earth with seas of silver, and broken blots of ebon blackness, they need not be all hopeless lunatics who respond with a kind of exaltation to the strong influences of her hour. But when she floats, a crescent bark, serene in the soft atmosphere of an autumn evening, then is her sway hushed and gentle—divine with thoughts that are not of earth. Whether by sunlight or by moonshine, long hours of solitary walks inland of this north-east coast of Aberdeenshire are to be counted amongst the purest of life's common pleasures. Then is the time for dreams. Then are composed essays and poems—every one of them perhaps to fade away, unwritten and forgot. Then are there pictures painted which never know paint or canvas. Then also is it that a subject for pen or pencil first forms itself in the mind, and in many a happy walk is pursued until "the idea shines." And when this is thus, we confess the hours not idly spent. Yet how deeply soever the mind may be at work, the eye sees and takes in with delight details of rock and grass and wild-

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flower, each varied outline of trees or fields, of hilltop and of cloud. Wild woods and mountains and river-sides may be more full of romantic beauty, yet, for everyday wear, these familiar roads with their old stone dykes are best. There are the roadside flowers and herbs, changing ever with the changeful months; the purple distance of wooded heights, with the field life, and birds—and the human interest, which last never can be least.

This Elrick countryside is very old—a truism that only means old cottages, old landmarks, old stones. There is a hilly road from which the prospect on a sunny late September morning is as beautiful as the breeze that blows over it is bright and health-giving. It is the very picture of prosperity. Amidst the upland corn and pasture are scattered clumps of trees and islands of white farmsteads. Around each farm lies its little enclosed bit of garden and a labourer's cottage or two, and the shadow of them aslant upon the hill. A black heap

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under every farm gable and beside every cot is the winter hoard of peat. Later in the month dark loads creep all day along the winding far-seen roads. It is the season for "leading" peats. Pasturing in the fields beside the cattle are flocks of white sea-mew. The birds rise and settle and rise again in a perpetual twinkle of white wings. The weather is so fine that "stookey Sunday" must be near. On stookey Sunday the corn-stooks stand in ordered ranks everywhere up and down the wide deserted lands. The last of the harvest ("clyack" they still call the last sheaf sometimes) has been cut by the youngest lass in the field, and only tarries for the "leading," or carrying, as they would say in England. There is a deeper quiet in the air than even on any ordinary Sabbath day, by contrast with the busy jollity of last week's end. The very silence speaks, while the Bible word keeps running in our mind—the word which said, "and the land had rest." The sheaves will stand as they are, all a-row up and down the fields day and night, for

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long. They have to await fulfilment of "the flailer's prayer"—the welcome shower that made the thrashing easy. An old rhyme formerly in use was written down nineteen years ago from the lips of an old ploughman crooning by the farm-kitchen fire:

"Tremblin' strae maks trottin' owsen;*
Trottin' owsen maks red lan' banks;
Red lan' banks maks a thin corn-yaird;
A thin corn-yaird maks a hungry fairmer!"

That is true Doric; but, whether in rhyme or prose, "the flailer's prayer" is now but an empty sound, for the big deafening thrashing-machine needs none of it. Yet, rain or shine, the stooks will bide a wee and hold the field. If to-day were Sabbath, the sea-birds would be away. Birds, etc., as we all know, have their own ways of spending it. On Sundays gulls are not seen inland. Rooks choose it for the first day of nest-building in the spring. Caged doves almost invariably lay an egg on Sunday. The heron alights by the burn near the house for an

* *Owsen*, oxen.

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hour's quiet fishing while the people are at kirk. Salmon get up the river unscared by mills, and bees are said not to swarm.

The aspect of a certain quiet full prosperity, so characteristic of this part of Scotland, is no mere idle show. The black peat neatly stacked at the gable end of the poorest dwelling alone might mark the difference. New slated houses are many, but there still remain dotted about near the roads or on the hillsides old low-roofed dreary little dwellings of the poor (poor, almost without *poverty*!), the same as were in existence a hundred years ago and more. The old thatch grows deep green crops of moss; the wooden lum is swathed round in hay-ropes; the doorway is only just high enough, or barely, for a man to walk in without knocking his head; little deep-set windows not made to open, with one like an afterthought worked in the wall beside the ingle-neuk. Sometimes huge boulders, built in as corner-stones, give a sense of solidness and security. How well the colour-tone of roof and walls blends

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with the colouring of all the land around! Dreary little northland cottages! how pleasant is their look of homely comfort, how engaging their bit of bright garden, and how seldom would it gain a prize for tidiness! Sweet simple flowers, such as are sown in spring, grow there, with a patch or two of so-called English iris and blue monkshood, all blooming as they never bloom in milder regions. If a few tall splendours of crimson sword-lily perchance aspire above the humbler flowers, they are guiltless of giving a shock of incongruousness, as would a scarlet geranium or yellow calceolaria, or any other flowering foreigner. Deep-rooted in Scotland in the hearts of her people is their love for gardens. It is a love born with their birth, and it forsakes them never. Even the children play at gardening, and make small pleasure-plots by the road, in rough waste-grounds, or in corners of the crofts. One such miniature garden I pass in walks along the Elrick roads. It is the joint property of a family of four children. The little space is carefully

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fenced round, and laid out in walks and flower-beds. Two tiny wooden gates, fastened with a loop of old string, admit—or keep out—the brownies, the only people who might be supposed to wish to trespass there, or sit under the shade of a tall tree of spiced southernwood in the midst! A fairy path leads to a thicket of spotted pulmonaria; and in a sunny corner is the strawberry bed, where is room for just one large strawberry root. Sometimes I have known the children make their “brownie” gardens among the foundation-stones of some poor ruined cot; and there I have seen a fairy farmyard too, with little cornstacks of wild grasses thatched with rush.

Bound up together with this native love for flowers and gardens is the faculty of vivid imagination. It dies down as the years increase, but in the bairnie’s breast, as a rule, it glows and burns. With flame more faint, perhaps, imagination does also not seldom illuminate the daily life of cottage children in the tamer South. In Berkshire field-

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paths, for instance, one may often come un-awares upon little altars piled within recesses of big tree-roots, decked out in freshly gathered flower-heads. It is the children who build these high places, and make their little offerings there of red clovers or buttercups or blue veronica. A tiny survival it may be of Mariolatry, or perchance of some remote pagan age. The remnants of that ruin at the foot of the Gallow Hill (where I found the little fairy farm and flower garden) wear a dreary aspect, more desolate even than those frequent ruins of desolated homes—just two gaunt roofless gables—that are seen afar in distant fields from the windows of some passing train. There remains only a heap of big foundation-stones smothered in weeds and thistles.

Nothing certain is known about the Gallow Hill, or the meaning of its gruesome name. Straight up the steep brae leads the path to the spot where it is said the gallows stood. All who came and went through that cottage door must have seen it. From the

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peep-hole window by the hearth it would be for ever in sight. One can fancy how, as years went on, the little home would become distasteful to the dwellers in it, and was at last deserted and pulled down. The hillside grass is fine and short, and thick with flowers. The track climbs through a plantation of young spruce and between the hoary boles of a few ancient beeches, and then, the summit reached, one may rest upon the heather all interwoven with blaeberry and thyme, and dream away a sunny August hour. All around, above, below reigns profoundest silence. No living creatures can be seen save the feeding cattle and white sea-gulls down in the low-lying pasture-lands. A wide landscape fraught with the stillness of deep peace spreads away and away to the far horizon-line of lilac hills. The sun shines sweetly on near farms and woods. On such a day, it might well have been, took place the last tragedy connected with the gibbet when it stood there, reared up on the hill crest, where we now take our ease resting among the

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honey-scented heath-bells. From the high-road a mile away, and from every path and every house within sight, the awful Thing could be seen, silhouetted black against the sun-bright sky. The half-forgotten tales that with difficulty may be extracted still from the country-folk round about are of the vaguest. Whatever happened here must have been at least 150 years ago. The parish archives—a part of which perished by fire—are silent upon the subject. Some say this was the place of execution for the whole of New Machar; others, that here stood the gallows-tree of the Lairds of Elrick, in the ugly old times when the lairds, or barons, “had power of pit and gallows.” No deep loch—like the loch of Spynie—being near at hand, the maintenance of a gallows was of course a necessary expense! “The oldest inhabitant” tells a tradition of his boyhood. Two herd-boys posted on the hill to watch the cattle (the land was not in those days enclosed) were playing together, and one hung up the other in sport upon a tree. Returning in an

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hour, the lad was dead as he hung. Then the boy suffered death himself on the gibbet, set up for him alone. Yet another and more ghastly tradition lingers, and would seem to point to the first idea of a place of public execution.* They say that one hot summer a hundred years ago the ripened berries had to be left to hang ungathered on the bushes in cottage-gardens within a certain distance of the Gallow Hill. Whatever may be the truth of all that is said to have happened here in those far days, time has since so wrought as to mellow into wild loveliness the once drear aspect of the hill of doom. We only know it now as a flowery brae, from whose summit is seen the prettiest home-view in all the countryside. Children love to play there; and thither will many a lover and his lass stroll out on Sunday afternoons. They never trouble about the old grim past! whilst I, who forget it never, often turn my

*This uncomfortable tradition is mistakenly attributed to Elrick Gallow Hill. I have since found it occurred in another more distant locality.

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steps that way in fond iteration. A part of the attraction simply means, it must be owned, that after a long walk southward, to return round by the Gallow Brae is usually the nearest way home.

Across the moss—rich in June and July with golden sedge and bog-buttercup, or white with downy tufts of *pussies* (cotton-grass)—the uncertain track is lost, at times a little unaccountably, in a great voiceless pine-wood. It may be found again on the margin of a little lonely loch, whence it leads back through the pines out into the cheerful roads. The Great Wood (so named by none except myself!) is not really very large, only its extent is greater than some other neighbouring woods. The charm of it is ideal. Even in autumn it is all suffused with the fragrance of the firs. The tall trees stand apart, and give breathing-room for every kind of wood wild-flower to push up and thrive through the brown carpet of fallen fir-needles. Patches of purple heather, with intervals of rosy ling, mix with the bright

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emerald of wood-sorrel. Hosts of small scabious toss light balls of lilac wool in all the more open greener spaces, above a network of creeping tormentilla. Ferns there are in profusest, daintiest variety, and half-hidden crowberry with dark polished foliage. Thinly scattered through all the outer fringes of the wood—luxuriantly crowding the deeper, cooler shades—the eye is conscious of pale brown triplet leaves on delicate inch-long stalks. It is wintergreen (*Trientalis europæa*), pride of the northern woods. Why our English name is wintergreen were hard to tell. When in June their prime was done, the little white flowers loosed hold and fell away—not petal by petal, but whole, like scattered snow-stars. Then, along with fresh green summer, the substance of leaves and stalks decayed, until all the plant seemed dipped in a brown autumnal dye. By and by each sombre-coloured triple leaf upheld a pearly seed or two. Often in warm September days has this white seed deceived unwary strangers, who, forgetting how the

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flowery time is long past, think to find fresh blooms upon the wintergreen. Soon these brown *reliquiæ* with their pearls shall perish and burn away into oblivion—little mimic flames of crimson.

Signs of some small arboreous life are not wanting in the wood. The ground is littered with short ends and tassels of fir-twigs nipped off from upper branches. Squirrels mostly are accused of the mischief (mischief far more likely to be the work of the insidious pine-beetle). A surer token of the unseen active presence somewhere of these little sportive beings is, that every red "tode-stol" has been skinned on the very first day of its appearing. In the brisk clear atmosphere of the fir-wood no such unwelcome guest as a "corpse candle," so called, will ever peer in among the throngs of fine tawny *agarics* springing up from under tawny fir-needles. These, with shy violet ones that enliven sometimes the moist dead leaves lying underneath isolated beech, seem to escape attention from the squirrels. They are never

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peeled as are the scarlet and orange. Do the little rascal "shadow-tails" taste a sugary flavour in the fine colour? They hide away so cleverly that rarely does the whisk of a tail of one betray it. Later in autumn they become more fearless, and are bold enough to chatter and scold at hide-and-seek among the branches. Then is the time to scatter nuts and almonds for them on the lawn close under our windows, and look for repayment in watching the delicious grace of their gambolling. The shadow-tails will dance about the lawn light as withered leaves—with frugal forethought, in contrast to their usual frivolity, sowing the turf with every nut they do not crack and eat. Could one but be a St Francis and attain the gift of charming wild creatures of the woods! There are those at whose call a squirrel will climb down from some high branch and take a nut from the hand, or perch inconveniently on the book in their lap if they happen to be reading under a tree. There is a lady I know, one who draws to her all living crea-

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tures. She was visited last week by a fine hedgehog, on the morning of her eighty-fifth birthday. When she opened the garden door, there sat piggy waiting on the doormat. He was regaled with milk, and next morning came again for more, bringing a pair of young ones with him. Such examples, however, of the power we covet are rare. Whilst at play with the shadow-tails, dare it be whispered how the only bit of a sermon I ever remembered much of afterwards occurred in one (preached by the Bishop of Oxford) at the service of completion of a village church-tower in Bucks. Referring to the old towers as landmarks, the sermon went on to describe that particular district of Mercia, as it was in the olden days. "For forty miles in a straight line," the Bishop said, "a squirrel might leap from tree to tree." A suggestive enough sketch this of the country Milton knew and loved, with its small old villages set in the midst of forest-land.

Other lesser forms of life abound in late

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summer days in this woody wild. There is a curious semblance of a transmigration into winged life in the hosts of new-born, yellowish, filmy moths fluttering just above the yellow withered grasses! They have just escaped from silky cells where in their chrysalis state they lie; and until they rise and fly, one would scarce guess the existence of these living leaves, these faded moths, so exactly are moth and dry grass matched in colour to a shade. Should the spinning of cocoons not yet have begun, and the hour for retirement from the world not come, the eye may chance upon some lovely caterpillar fattening on the heather. Nature truly gives rein to fancy of a marvellous order in her decorations of some of these amongst the lowliest of her creatures. Nature's consummate taste and infinite variety are here displayed in endless combinations of both form and tint. A favourite type—one sees it everywhere—is done with ornamental side-stripes of electric blue and black velvet cross-bands, set off with a head-decoration

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of black peacock's crests and tufts of spun silver all along the back. Not one in ten thousand of these art masterpieces in miniature is like to be seen of men. But to the serene grandeur of the mind of Nature, what matters? The heather in the shaded woods is not broad or deep enough to sustain with safety a caterpillar so grand as one we once met on a grouse-moor over the hill, within sight of the sea. The girth of it was huge, and in length it measured nigh four inches. The green of it matched the heather leaf on which it fed, and it bore on each segment tiny raised rosettes in pink, set on rings of black velvet, closely imitating the pink heath-buds. The copy was so true that living creature and flowering spray were one in appearance. This black velvet, so much used for insect patterns of all varieties, may possibly be meant to represent an effect of shadow or of empty space, behind or under the mimicry in the pattern, whatever it may be. Another beauty, a good-sized hairy caterpillar, who has a habit of crossing your

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path, is clothed in sleek chestnut fur, with the customary trimmings of black velvet. He is a fine fellow in his way, feeding on and on till the end of autumn; so the warm fur coat must be comfortable. There are no bright pigments in reserve for the painting of the imago's wings, at least of these species. When the perfect moth comes forth it is dark night. In the dark they take their pleasure, and dark colours suit well the brown heathlands where they play.

On dry autumnal afternoons, though sundown be near at hand, there seems no need to hurry homeward. It is so sweet to sit down a while, cushioned among blaeberry and ferns, and let Time's steps steal past uncounted! The stillness is profound—like the still silence in a dream; for now the "squirrel's granary is full, and no birds sing." Between the red pine-stems a level ray strikes along the glistening pathway netted over with gossamer, weaving a silvery web which stretches endlessly afar, till lost at last in the golden sun-mist. The way

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home takes us by the edges of the little loch. Since this time last year how spoilt it is! The great December gale flung down its tallest pines along the right bank. Down into the water they fell, and there ever after they are likely to lie neglected and decaying—for it is worth no one's while to remove them. All the repose of the tiny lakelet with its clear reflections has vanished. The pretty water looking-glass is shattered, without a hope of mending. Earlier in the summer we might have forgotten all this ruin, in the pleasure of watching the dragon-flies on the reedy margin. Strong, swift, hungry hunters! arrayed in lucid tinsel, coursing up and down in the glory of the latest sun-glance. Myriads of ephemeræ there are, in the plenitude of their monotonous enjoyment. There is a kind of pathos about them as they rise and fall by the million in rhythmic dance above the water, to the tune of "a short life and a merry one!" Two hours is the longest allotted to any one of them—cut short to a few minutes by many a greedy trout. This

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is how an observant parish minister describes ephemerae, in a county history of the last century (it may be concluded they are the creatures alluded to): "About sunset the loch is infested by flies of the gnat kind, which fasten in great numbers on every part of the fisher's clothes, and, leaving their skins, fly off sportive as from a prison. The incumbent has often returned home covered with their *spolia opima*." Flies of the gnat kind, and others, are but a by-interest. It is the spoilt loch that for the moment fills the thoughts with unavailing regrets. Happily the wood itself was not laid waste by that outrageous gale in 1894. Folk talked of the "blind fury" of it. It might be more graphically true to affirm that the storm fiend that luckless day deliberately picked out for ruin the loftiest old trees, the finest woods, the shelter that could least be spared, the choicest and healthiest plantations throughout the land. And then woods even of the grandest were overthrown, without Salvator-like picturesqueness. Fifty broad

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acres on one estate have been seen prostrate; yet the effect is not fine. The trees fell all one way as the wind blew, and lay along the ground in rows. But for the upturned roots it might have been the work of the estate woodman. In wooded spaces of less extent the effect is often less formal, the timber more tossed about and broken up, as though the trees had made in vain a brave stand against the wind.

Meanwhile, with a quiet persistence, Nature repairs herself. I have seen an unthinned plantation, the firs standing so thick that for years sunlight had never penetrated the gloom. During a storm down they crashed, and a broad way through was cleared. The wood was ruined. But in less than six months after a faint film of green had overspread the bare ground; and wood-sorrel and foxglove and vigorous stinging nettles, with seedling sycamore and chestnut and green things whose existence was unguessed, came up from the earth, obedient to the law of sunshine. The reproach of bar-

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ren gloom was lifted, and the whole place smiled in living green. In the pleasaunce of an old house* near the river Dee no repair like this seems possible. In the middle of a beech-grove one giant tree made as fine a picture as heart of landscape-painter could desire. For generations the group of trees had stood on guard, overshadowing "The Bride's Well"; a shallow pool of clear translucent water, where, tradition tells, a bride who had fled from the house on her bridal night was drowned. None now can say what might have been the forgotten tragedy that drove her to despair. Only the bare fact has come down to us. The old ground-officer, when questioned, will half-angered repeat: "It was juist a bride, an' she drooned hersel' as brides wull," as if quite a usual thing to occur! That fatal winter, when the blast of the Terrible One rushed past, not all the magnificent girth and strength of the great beech availed to save him. In one moment he and his brothers fell, and the dark pool lay bare

*Culter House.

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to winds and weather. Not always indeed by any means are Nature's laws kind to man. The great tract of wood a few miles off, where upwards of a hundred thousand Scotch fir and spruce went down, felled by the stormy power of the wind, knows since another power, in its way as great—the resistless might of the infinitely little. The tiny pine-beetle, always at work more or less undermining the bark, found his labour made easier by the prone condition of the timber. So they increased enormously, until their multitudes, becoming tired of the fallen logs, unscrupulously transferred themselves to the healthy trees that remained upright. Under the beetles' persistent onslaught these soon grew to be diseased and useless. There seems no way of getting rid of the plague, except to burn up the whole wood. Meanwhile, the little *curculii* go on prospering and multiplying to their hearts' content.

And now the little spoilt loch is left behind, and we are on the road once more. Long ago—yet well within memory—a certain

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fairy ointment, the recipe whereof is lost, used to be rubbed over the eyes of children as they slept.

I myself remember, when a child, lying awake in the long northern summer twilight listening to the nurses gossiping together in the nursery. Talking of their former places one said to the other, "Mr Wilson came up ilka nicht while the bairns were sleepin', to rub ointment on their een to mak' them see the fairies!" Something of the kind is wanted now to enable many of us to see and enjoy in our walks things whose chiefest charm lies not in size or rarity. There are wild gardens at our gates that for the many simply do not exist. No one takes a walk purposely to see and enjoy them; yet there they are, ever at hand, ever ready to enchant the eye that sees. These narrow gardens need no care—indeed, care would destroy them. The gardener is never seen to sow a single seed there, though one sees a thousand unpaid labourers at work in them all summer, till frost sets in and snow hides

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them. The birds of the air know well their labour rights! The gardens that lie on the edges of the roads between two stone dykes are fascinating indeed! The farther north one travels, the richer and more varied is the flowery edging. The sight of these flowers in their brief bright season of delight is joyful enough to beguile the longest walks. Miles of road are never wearisome, even on that almost treeless north-east coast, with such an accompaniment of blooming flower-borders. Endless are the varieties of vetches. One—*Vicia Cracca*—is the commonest of all, covered with lilac clusters. I have seen a long quarter of a mile of beech hedge on the Peterhead road literally netted over with lilac vetch. One would toil on a long way, to feast the eye on such wealth of ethereal loveliness. A botanist, however, would not look twice at my wayside gardens, for they contain, as a rule, nothing scarce or curious. They are charming solely because of the silent jubilation, as it were, of these crowded flowers and green leafage of them down there

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at your feet as you pass. The magic of them is their boundless variety—not of species, but of individual growth and manner. It is the *gaudium* of them. Most joyful gauds indeed, with their fresh yellows and pure whites, their blues and their purples! All seem to be there at the same moment; nevertheless, week by week, one after another, each separate beauty takes the lead. Deep beds of *Galium*, yellow or white (ladies' bedstraw), give place to starry tracts of the little stitchwort, luxuriant yellow balls of giant bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), and spotted *persicaria*, delicately pink. Here and there, where green rushes betray some under-thread of a little roadside runnel, is pale forget-me-not, or a large-flowered yellow and brown-speckled *mimulus*, standing erect, looking what it is—a wanderer from the garden.* Ragged-robin and rosy statice, and a hundred others, with ladies' mantle (*Alchemilla*), and too many far for naming,

*Now entirely naturalised as a wild-flower, it forgets it was ever otherwise!

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add variety and colour. Latest of all comes little quaint Euphrasia. And then, lasting long into the bad weather, there is sometimes seen the exquisite *Galeopsis tetrahit* (it bears no plain English name that I know). This belongs to the turnip-field over the dyke—chancing now and again with the others in the road. It is like a glorified “archangel” or dead-nettle. But if an angel, then did its flower-change surprise it suddenly, while yet the iris-light of Paradise had not faded from its wings. A freak of fancy! must be tolerated, with the wonder of this small field-flower under our very eyes. The colours are a lovely blending of primrose yellow with tenderest lilac. One other bright gem must not be unmentioned. Scotland’s beloved little wild heart’s-ease grows everywhere, haunting the dullest roadside, the stoniest, most barren spots. The velvet glow of its purple seldom dies away until extinguished in the snow. Autumn may come in with cold or wet, and go out in sleet or snow; the little flower that rejoiced us, freely blos-

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soming all summer long, allures us still with its brilliant beauty. There is always just one more flower to be seen—and one more still, as a surprise when all seems over and done; and then the very last is gone—and then comes yet another! and so on into dead winter. As summer slowly dies, the shining bloom of the roadside insensibly tones down into seeding. Black vetch-pods begin to cluster in the tangle, overtopped by spikes of red-brown sorrel. Carlododdies'* stamened powdery heads are no more—they ceased their play ere August waned—and richly scented white clover disappears at last. But although we cannot ourselves tire of wild-flowers, and yet to talk of them too long is tedious, one word must be said for the loveliest of all. For what would our "narrow gardens" be without their bluebells? "The bluebells of Scotland" naturally know their place, and here are their clans assembled wheresoever there is foothold in crannies of the stony dykes. Or, their airy bells wave

**Plantago lanceolata*.

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suspended on delicate stalks all through and through the grassy banks where the road dips down between, and Elrick Burn flows across under the bridge. There are bluebells of every shade of that wan greyish love-tint we call blue. Now and then, to our joy, comes one pure white, ineffable in its perfect purity.

The wild birds delight in these old stone walls or dykes, where no cover exists to screen them. They seem to be for ever hopping up on to the topmost stones of them, and darting across or dropping down into the field before one can get near enough to see them close. Especially tantalising in this way is the fieldfare, or "Hieland pyat," as it is popularly known in Aberdeenshire. A pair of them will pretend to be quite familiar—will perch just a step or two in advance, and then fly off, perching again a bit farther on. And this little game will be kept up till at last off they go, flying far afield. All the time one has been vainly longing for a good look at their handsome plumage. Chaffinches

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number most, of all the small common birds. They are everywhere. Easier to tame than sparrows, and without question more delightful, they flit close round one's feet, learn to fly in at the window for food, or follow one about the garden in their pretty confidence. As winter draws near they gather into families, and are seen in lonely places, a few together in the trees. Poor little chaffinches! may they have a good time wherever they betake themselves, and no cares to damp their saucy, brisk *insouciance*. Yellow-hammers, who look at one a moment and are gone, are but few hereabouts, and are lustrous as gold in the sunshine. Fewer still are there of that slender, gracefulest of birds, the yellow wagtail. Rarely are they met by burn or road. Yet they are tame enough to run up and down all day long on the roof of a house, or peeping in at the windows. Out in the stubble is a great blackness of rooks. Thousands are feeding, with one or two black awkward fellows sitting on a fence as sentries. Country-folk have a

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way of foretelling the weather by the rooks' movements. What the secret of it may be I know not. Half the world knows no more about their neighbours the rooks than the old Scotch farmer, who, on the occasion of a village meeting, when the lecturer proposed to read a paper about rooks, remarked, "What can he have to say about the crow? It's juist a bird that eats 'taties." Nevertheless, both wise and wonderful are the ways of the "crow."

It is at dusk of an October evening that the "tu-whit storm" descends upon the land, settling down on some big field that is in grass or stubble. Then the ground is grey with an innumerable multitude of peewits, or plovers. With them comes a mixed lot of starlings or of smaller birds. It is the eve of migration, and the plovers move jerkily about, and are very silent. It is an excited crowd, however, incessantly in motion. When the plovers rise, the noise of their wings is as the sound of many waters. They need hardly make such a fuss though, for

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they do not mean to cross the sea. It is only a short trip into Berwickshire that they propose. But what of those other birds who boldly dare the seas? How many, or how few, will land safe on the other side? There is a remarkable description printed somewhere, of night-watchers in a lighthouse seeing the white breasts of hundreds of birds beating like a snowstorm against the windows of the lantern, and of how the morning light showed rock and sea around strewn thick with their dead. The passionate impulse that urges a migratory bird, has been known to impel one that is caged to dash itself against the bars so soon as the fateful hour has struck. The subject has deeply engaged many minds. It does so still, and it remains one of the profoundest of Nature's mysteries.

Round by Moneykebbock (corrupted from the ancient name Mony Cabbuck, or Many Roebucks), past "the highlands of St Machar," or New Machar, is to my thinking a pleasant tramp—all the pleasanter because unknown to any tourist's guide-book! Bush-

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es of wild rose (we have none too many here), with broom and gorse and bracken, border all the way up to the heathery fallows or highlands. A steep line of road rises through land broken with wood and corn and turnips, passing within sight of an old walled graveyard—the church was moved up to the village a long time ago—in the middle of a field, by the farm of Chapel of Elrick. No path leads up to it; it stands like an island in the fields, overgrown with sycamore and wych-elm. One can enter by the small unlocked iron gate, and give a passing glance within to the long melancholy grass that hides a few forgotten names. When the trees are bare, a grey and ghostly tomb surrounded with rusty iron rails, in the centre of the enclosure, is visible from the road, above the wall. In gusty winter nights the glint of a light has been seen to rest upon this central stone. It is only when a wild west wind sweeps the country; and then, they say, the flame burns steady, unflickering. Half a mile up, towards the heathy

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wild, the road passes by a long low cottage of the familiar bygone type, with wide chimney and wooden lum. A wilderness of weeds and flowers slopes down from the door. If we make our way through the tangle, and knock and enter the little dark house-place, we shall most likely find its mistress, a bent old woman, sitting idly by her dull peat fire. The place is all smoke-embrowned, from the open chimney to the settle under the window ledge, and shelves with the dusty row of discoloured old willow-pattern plates and little jugs and bowls. The dark cavernous box-bed in the wall is brown, and very brown the big worn Bible resting on the little brown table. The very shadows are brown. The framed photograph of a brand-new Aberdeen steamer strikes the sole false note in the Rembrandt-like effect of the whole. The woman is too old and feeble to work any longer in the flower-tangle at her door. Half unwilling, she will perhaps speak of her youngest boy who died so long ago, and tell how he had cared for that little bit

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of garden; how he planted every plant in it, and how for his sake she loved every one of them—the orange lilies and tall white Canterbury bells, the polyanthus and candy-tuft, columbine and snow-in-summer; and above all the blue cornflowers, which have bloomed and seeded and bloomed again for many a year, never letting go their hold of the soil. How azure blue are these cornflowers! She don't mind if I gather one on taking leave. Could we but more easily get at them, how often in the life-story of cotters whose doors we pass by unthinking—might be found pathos as deep as any in printed books! Sometimes we come to know something of it when for a moment the veil drifts aside.

After this the road goes on past "the most beautiful tree in all the world!" So says the eye, each time I look upon that tree. It is a willow—grand, immense, in both bulk and height. It is mirrored in the glassy farm-pond near, where cattle cool their feet and drink, and shelter beneath the shadow of it

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when the sun is hot. Walk past a little way, then turn and look back, and gaze upon the tree rising up into the blue, in the glory of its countless silver! The grey of it is like an olive grove on the hill-slopes of Esterel. The shimmering leaves as the light breeze lifts them are like the silvery turn of olive sprays when the south wind blows. One longs to sit down before the tree with an easel and a big canvas. Most hopeless of tasks! Words cannot paint the rhythm of its triad foliage; no painter's brush could give the glimmering grey of it. Walking backwards is sorry work; so the many-yearred willow must be left behind as we walk on, the charm of its wandering sheen exchanged for richer green of woodland beech. It is in this direction that our old friend, the man with the little yellow dog, may oftenest be met. Robb is the man's name, and Jamie is the other's. The man breaks stone for the roads, while the dog lies on his coat, guarding it. This man went beyond seas, and stayed abroad twelve years, and sore

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misliked the climate. Then the homing-hunger set in and prevailed, and back he came. There is no earning so much in a week here as he earned in a day out there. But what of that? It is bonnie Scotland, and it is Home! The man's companion is the exact copy of a tiny yellow fox—sharp-pointed ears, brush, and all; and it is a pattern of faithful endurance. One day Robb was summoned in haste to a funeral at a distance. He left work and was off at once, forgetting Jamie, who lay guarding his red necktie in a neighbouring shallow sand-pit. After two nights' and two days' absence the man got home from the funeral, but no little dog met him at the door. For the first time he remembered he had never called Jamie to follow, that day, as he left work. Robb started for the sand-pit; and when the place was reached late in the afternoon, there lay the little yellow dog upon the handkerchief, still faithfully on guard. They believe he had never moved; and, dog-like, he bore no grudge.

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“A country enclosed with stone walls” might in a way describe this part of Aberdeenshire, but it would convey no accurate idea of the picturesque old fences. The stones of them, laboriously gathered, as the land became cultivated, from surrounding waste or moorland, are rounded like boulders—relics of the age when glaciers slid over all this region, bringing down from the mountains moraine and river-rounded stones. Wherever the largest of them are hewn or blasted, they sparkle in the sun with mica. These dykes were built up long ago—many of them so far back that moss, green as a tourmaline, girds them in thick velvety swathing; or lead-coloured lichens roughen the surface. Long lengths of wall are often dappled with gold-dust of that slowest yellow lichen which has been said to take a hundred years of growth before its increase shows. Delicately fronded ferns peep from holes and crannies, or vagrant crane’s-bill or aromatic thyme smile out from between the boulders; and the *styme* or turf, lying deep

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upon the upper parts, is often rich with all kinds of flowerets and fern. Dear to the secret heart of true sons and daughters of the North are these old dykes of Scotland.

A grey moraine lying desolately amid ferns and moss, where for centuries the stones have lain on a fir-grown brae, gives the passer-by strange thoughts of other times when the world was young—before the old road that cuts straight through was thought of. Sometimes, here and there, one comes across some huge block of granite built up in a fence—mute witness that somewhere not far off existed once a stone circle. In the midst of open fields, where a wide horizon extends all round, these ancients were not in former days uncommon. Latterly the few that still remain have been in a great degree protected. But it is not so very long since, that if the great stones interfered with the plough they were recklessly broken up and used for the *bigging* of new farmhouses or for gate-posts, or one would be left standing for the cattle to rub against. Someway off there is a place marked

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on the county map "Standing Stones," and once we journeyed there, hoping to find at least some signs of a circle. Alas! the name is all that remains, with a few big stones built into the walls of a most modern farmhouse, and a pair of them set up at the farmyard gate. Miles away in another direction, on a high hill-moss above the wild east coast, other stones of antiquity, I suppose as great as these, are found. There was a length of dyke built chiefly of round grindstones and rounded pudding-like anvil-stones (great pebbles of quartzite with picked hollows), which were used in the manufacture of flint arrow- and spear-heads, and knives, &c. The heathy, sandy ground was thickly strewn with chips and fragments of spoilt missiles. The strange thing is, that not a flint exists naturally anywhere near this ancient flint factory. Once I came suddenly upon an arrow-head or elf-shot lying on the edge of a turnip-field near a plantation of ilex-oak. It was curiously fashioned, like the pointed leaf of an ilex, and hardly distinguishable from

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the brown ilex leaves around it. These elf-shots, when one has the luck to find them, are sure to have just been shot; they never lie long, or such is the universal belief among the country-folk. A tale is told of a lady and gentleman on horseback quietly riding along a country road, when the lady's hand unwittingly closed on an elf-shot that instant lodged in the folds of her habit. In Scotland any weird may be believed; nothing there is too strange to be true. It is the land of mystery.

The "sculptured stones" exist still in great numbers. Too mystic and awe-inspiring for love, they are venerated by the initiated. Two of these have remained unheeded age after age, within the low-walled graveyard of a roofless church some distance south of Elrick Woods. After crossing "the crooked Don," and climbing a steep rough bank on the other side, the ruined church is reached. It was but a few years since the parish church. The ancient font, long cast out, still lies half-smothered in rough

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grass and weeds among the graves. If one climbed on to an old sepulchre under a window, one might peer through the small greenish pane and mark how a long green ivy streamer had pushed through the roof and waved just over the pulpit, and how cobwebs hung round the decayed unpainted pews. One glance would be enough at such a dull uncanny-looking place! Now, the old roof has fallen in, and nettle-beds fill up where pews and pulpit stood, and a brand-new kirk, with solid roof and no ivy, has arisen near. The two sculptured stones of the outside wall have, however, been promoted to within the blocked west doorway. From the recess loom the well-known enigmatic figures—strange outlines, sharp and distinct as if graven yesterday. There are the *harpoons* and *spectacles*, and the great Beast with trunk curled over his back. It appears over and over again on these stones, and is by common consent an elephant. They say the figure might have been evolved from descriptions of the elephant learned

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from travellers who returned from the Far East. It is the same as found on carven stones at this day in India. Many are the speculations of the learned. As one of the unlearned I too have my theory; which shall not be spoken.

The lost key to all these hieroglyphs has been discovered by none. And all the time, with slow, sure pace, further and further away the centuries travel on; and ever more and more remote, more faint and small, shines apart the old, old Past. Even as year by year the hundredth part of a few grains of surface may be weather-bitten from the stone, so slow yet certain is the ultimate effacement of these undeciphered signs. The Maiden Stone of Bennachie (beyond the limits of a walk from St Machar) bears sculptured signs, some of which are the very same in character as those in the ruined doorway. Ten feet tall, gaunt and grey, stands the Maiden in the field above the fell-dyke, close to the public road that passes on round by the foot of Bennachie. Ages of storm and

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tempest has she endured—alone, unshaken. Generations of men, in long and vast procession, have been born, and lived, and perished, while she has stood there, where first they set her, on the dreary moorland. Infinite toil must it have cost to cut the enormous monolith out of the quarry and bring it down the mountain-side; infinite care and skilled art in that rude age to work, in such bold yet finished relief, the hard uncompromising granite—it is coarse red-toned granite of Bennachie—and make it tell the story that all the coming races of the earth were to understand and know. The granite and its sculptured story were to last for ever. And now, poor stone! all outworn and crumbling, only when the sun shines full upon you an hour after noonday, late in summer, can your carved images be made out at all with clearness, and then only by the transparent lilac shadows of them. The elephant is there, and the harpoon or scales; there is a mirror and a comb, and over them the ass-centaur is represented with action true to nature and

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full of spirit. What avails the labour and the skill, since now the whole is empty of meaning? A large notch in the upper part remains in proof of the legend which tells how the Fiend pursued the Maid of Drumdurno Farm as she fled towards Pittodrie Woods, and clutched her shoulder, when on the instant she was turned to stone. Men of science travel long distances to see the strange thing. Tourists hire carriages and come out from Aberdeen and picnic under its shadow. The dyke has to be scaled; and while they walk round and scrutinise, and are none the wiser, the driver in the roadway nods asleep on his box. And then they sit down and eat their sandwiches, and the young colts in the field come round and sniff and have to be scared away. One visitor may pluck a tiny heart's-ease from a bevy of them growing there, and then the carriage-load drives off. They have seen the sight, they have lunched, and are content. Twenty or more years ago the moss had not been ploughed up nor the new road made,

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and the stone was still knee-deep in heather. Yet even now, alone in a field hemmed in with common life—stared at, desecrated, the impression made by a first sight of that great melancholy stone is one not to be forgotten. A hundred wheels might rattle past, noisy crowds might surround it, but the Maiden Stone of Bennachie would seem to stand for ever as it now is standing—rooted in solitude, wrapt round with silence.

Once, and once only—it was after one of those picnics—the silence spoke, and said for the speechless maid:

“ Oh gentle lady of noble race
With earnest eyes and stately grace,
Why have you come to-day to trace
The mystic lines of my stony face?
Dare I but speak I could tell to *you*
My strange wild tale in its aspect true,
And why I am standing still and lone
With my secret shut in my heart of stone.
For the stars that met in your horoscope,
With their gifts of dread, and their gifts of hope,
Gave you, life's value to enhance,
Your soul of poetry and romance.

The flowers' secrets are all your own,
Then why not that of the Maiden Stone?

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But no, my time is not yet fulfilled,
I can but whisper—'My heart is stilled,
My secret silent within my breast.'
Think of me as I am here to-day,
The sunshine gilding my robe of grey;
The soft wind near me with kisses sweet,
And heart's-ease blossoming round my feet."

September 24, 1895.

RENA.

Far, far have we wandered from the sweet home-walks of Elrick! and in memory alone their charm may be retraced. Could I but answer when the spirit calls, how would its flowery lanes and footpaths bear again the print of eager feet! how would the dreams once more thicken amongst the green beech leaves and amid the darkness of the firs, or glow within the fire of sunset clouds! how would the ear hear with delight the low song of the ouzel—half-outsung by the bubbling burn around him—or hearken the harsh cry of some grey sea-gull overhead gravely winging to the sea! Recalling in the fogs of London lost joys of sun-bright summers, one forgets that winter reigns supreme, and that the Field of the Fairies lies flowerless and drear, hid beneath the soft white winter snow-sheet.

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MARY G.W. WILSON





